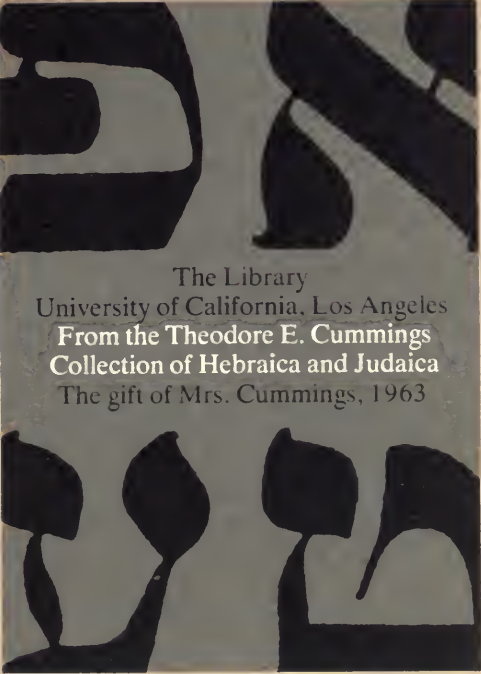


# ADDRESSES TO JEWISH CHILDREN



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ADDRESSES TO CHILDREN



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# ADDRESSES TO CHILDREN

By

THE LATE MRS. MORRIS JOSEPH

And by

MRS. BETHEL HALFORD



LONDON: PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY FOR THE DISTRIBUTION  
OF JEWISH LITERATURE, 67, WHITECHAPEL RD., E.1.

NEW YORK: BLOCH PUBLISHING CO., 16 WEST 23RD ST.



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## INTRODUCTION

**A**LL the addresses here printed were delivered at the Children's Services regularly held in my Synagogue on Sabbath mornings, and I willingly respond to the invitation of the Society for the Distribution of Jewish Literature to prepare them for the Press.

I do so in token of my appreciation of the good work which the Society is accomplishing, and also as an act of reverence for my wife's memory.

It was her desire that if any of her little talks to the children she loved so well were ever printed, they should be accompanied by some of the able and sympathetic addresses spoken to the same audiences by Mrs. Bethel Halford, for whose efforts she had much admiration, and whom I take this opportunity of cordially thanking for her valuable co-operation in the conduct of the Services.

Owing to the generosity of my friend, the late Mrs. Lionel Lucas, the realisation of my wife's desire has now been made possible.

I fervently trust that the printed word may extend the achievement of the spoken one, by helping to imbue a yet larger number of little ones with ardour for Jewish belief and duty.

MORRIS JOSEPH.

*April, 1920.*

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# Addresses to Children

## COUNTING THE DAYS

**B**ETWEEN the first day of Passover and the Feast of Pentecost there are seven weeks or forty-nine days. They are called the days of the *Omer*. The Hebrew word *Omer* is the name for a certain measure of corn which was brought to the Temple as an offering on Passover in olden times. Hence the name given to these days. These days of the *Omer* are marked in the synagogue by a peculiar ceremony. Each day is counted aloud at night. We say, "This is the first day of the *Omer*," or "this is the fourth," or "this is the fourteenth, which makes two weeks," and so on, until we come to the forty-ninth day, or seventh week, and then we keep the Feast of Pentecost. Now it seems to me that this counting is intended to teach us a very necessary lesson, to teach us how very quickly time goes, to make us think each night that another day has been taken from our lives. But you may ask, "Why should this counting go on for just these seven weeks? Why not all the year?" Well, perhaps the reason is that it wouldn't be much use to go on counting the days week after week, month after month, always. We should come to count quite automatically, that is to say, without thinking about it; then the act would lose all its meaning. The penny-in-the-slot machines give you a packet of sweets for a penny, but they do so in a machine-like way. They do not think of what they are doing, and they do not make *you* think much about it.

The whole thing is as mechanical as possible ; that is why it is called an *automatic* machine. It is otherwise with these days of the Omer, which, just because they fall during only a few weeks of the year, arouse our curiosity, grip our attention, force us to think.

And if you consider just for a minute, you will find out for yourselves what good it can do to learn the lesson taught by these days, to be reminded how quickly time passes. It surely cannot be intended just to make us unhappy, for all the lessons taught by our religion are meant, on the contrary, to make us happy. Well, I expect that, with the exception of just my tiniest hearers, you have all guessed the deeper lesson we are meant to learn from this act of counting—namely, that just because time passes so quickly, we must see that we do not waste a minute of it. If you look at the little hand of a watch, the hand that marks the seconds, you can see it move ; you can see the seconds and the minutes racing away and carrying bits of our lives with them. But while we can stop that little hand from going round if we choose, we cannot stop time from galloping on. It gallops on always, and we cannot get one minute back even if we paid thousands of pounds for it. We shall have other hours and other days, but never again just this hour and just this day ; and this hour and this day are taken from the other hours and the other days that remain to us, and make them fewer in number. It is a solemn thought. A day or an hour gone is gone for ever. It is lost as surely as a ring is lost that drops from our finger into the sea. But it is far more precious than a ring, though the ring be of gold and set with the finest diamonds. It is part of our life—an opportunity for doing good, the task given to us with our life. So, as a dear old man once said, “ If there is any good thing we can do, any kindness we can show to anyone, let us do it now, for

we shall not pass this way again.” “We shall not pass this way again!”—that means that we shall never live this life, or this bit of it, again; so let us be wise and make good use of it while we have it. Lost opportunities can never be recalled. It is a serious thought, I say. Time has been given to us, not to waste, but to use. I don’t mean for a moment that it is waste of time for you to play and enjoy yourselves; that is making a good use of it if you play at the right time and not when you ought to be working. There is a time for everything, both for work and for play; but there is no time, even in the longest life, for loafing, for being idle when duty calls for action. Life is a splendid thing for us all if we make good use of it, if we are careful to remember that it has been given to us to help others, and so, in the highest sense of the words, to help ourselves—to help ourselves to fulfil the great purpose of life. Do not think that, because you are young, there is plenty of time, and that you need not begin to think about serious things until you are grown-up. If you don’t begin when you are young, the chances are that you will never begin at all, for you will keep on putting it off, thinking always that there is plenty of time, until you are old, and then you will think that you are too old to begin. “To-morrow,” we say; but “to-morrow never comes.” To-day is all we have. So let us use to-day. Whatever good work we have to do let us begin it now; for it is now or never.

Let me tell you a story. Once there was a man who was very rich and very clever. He could have helped hundreds of his fellow-creatures if he had only tried, but, instead of thinking about them, he just thought about himself, and how he could best have a good time. At last he grew old and ill, and felt that his end was near. Then he began to repent. “Oh,” he said, “if I had only a few more years to live, how

differently I would act ! Instead of only thinking about myself I would try to make other people happy. I would help the poor and the suffering, feed the hungry, and be kind to poor little children. Oh, cannot I have a few more years to live so that I may do this ? ” Then he heard a Voice saying, “ Yes, you shall live, not only a few years more, but many years ; but see to it that henceforth you spend your time well.” You can imagine how delighted the man was. But see how silly he showed himself to be ! “ Anyway,” he said, “ I can enjoy myself for a few years, for I have many years before me ; then I will begin to help other people.” And so the time went on ; twenty, thirty years passed, and still he was always *going* to begin to be a better man. But habit was too strong for him ; he never began. And so the appointed time came to an end at last. Again he lay on his death-bed, and again he prayed for longer life so that he might do better ; and once more he heard the Voice, but this time it only said two words, the saddest words we can any of us hear : “ Too late.” Take the lesson to heart, dear children. You are young, but the longest life passes so quickly that, even when well used, it is not long enough for all we have to do. Let the counting of the *Omer*, the counting of each day as it passes, remind you how quickly all your days are passing. Strive with all your hearts to use them wisely, to do your tasks, to be kind, and good, and helpful, during the days that will never come back, so that to not one of you may those dread words “ Too late ” be spoken. Strive so to use your days, and then there will be nothing to regret in their passing away.

## NEW YEAR THOUGHTS

**T**HE New Year has begun ! Children, does that mean very much to you ? I hope it does. A new year ! What is it going to bring us—happiness or unhappiness ? Can any of us say ? No one knows what the future has in store. And yet I think that we can all say that the coming year will bring us happiness if we deserve it, and if, further, we have a right idea of what happiness means. For that also is important. Some people are never happy because their ideas of happiness are all wrong. They mistake low pleasures for happiness, and when they find that these things are only shams they are disappointed and miserable. The happiness I am thinking of is the real kind—that which comes from the knowledge that we have done our best and been our best—that we have tried our utmost to be true to our higher selves. It is a solemn thought that the old year, with all its opportunities for being and doing good, has gone for ever. It is a solemn thought, but it need not be a sad one. The old year has gone, it is true, but in its place we have a new year, bringing all sorts of bright hopes, offering us all sorts of new opportunities. It lies before us like a new exercise book, with no writing on its pages. They are all blank. Will you not try hard to fill up those pages well ? Will you not try hard to prevent any smudges from spoiling their whiteness ? Will you not try hard so that the story of the new year shall be written in golden letters ? I am afraid that those last words

sound very grand and poetical, but I want you to understand that the thing can really be done, and I want you to try your best to do it. You can make the year's record beautiful, so bright as to deserve the name of golden. The pages need not be blotted if you make up your minds that they shall not be. And now is the time to make up your minds—now, when you are beginning an entirely new exercise book. With every one of the pages clean and fine we must needs say to ourselves that not one of them shall be spoilt. The beginning of a year is the very best time to make good resolves, for the whole of the year is before us ; not one of its three hundred-and-sixty-five days has yet been darkened by any unworthy thing.

This New Year's day, and the days that come between it and the still more solemn Day of Atonement, are, as you know, called the *Days of Penitence*. They are so called because we have to use them for thinking about the faults we have committed in the year just gone, and being sorry for having committed them. That is what *penitence*, or *repentance*, means. But, of course, as you know very well, it is no good just to be sorry—that only makes us miserable, and does not help us at all. Being sorry for our faults is only a step towards something better and more useful. The only good in it is that it may help us to make up our minds not to repeat our faults, not to have any to be sorry for when the next new year comes round. "Oh, it is so difficult," I can fancy some of you saying ; "even if we try very hard to do right we don't succeed." May I tell you why you don't succeed ? It is because you don't try hard enough. We all, unfortunately, get into the habit of doing wrong, and it is so terribly hard to conquer habits. If someone does anything we don't like, we get angry—at least many of us do—and then we say unkind words. If we don't feel inclined to work,

we idle. If we don't like being tidy and orderly, we just leave our things about and let them get into confusion. And so on, and so on. And the only excuse we can offer is the old, old plea, "Oh, I can't help it." Now the first good resolve we have to make in this new year is that we *will* help it. We can do better if we like. All that is needed is will-power—power to alter ourselves, power to change sides and fight for goodness instead of badness.

To change sides ! That reminds me of something that happened one afternoon years ago when I was on one of the Italian lakes. I was in a boat, sailing down the lake. The weather was very changeable. On one side of the lake there was a lovely light on the mountains, making the whole scene brilliant. On the other side the mountains were blotted out by darkness. A lady, who was looking at the brightness, crossed over to her friend on the other side of the boat, and asked her to come and look at the lovely view in the sunshine. "Oh, I can't come," she said, "it's too much trouble, and what's the use ? the sunshine will soon be clouded over, and then it will all be as black as this." Aren't we, many of us, like that foolish lady ? We can all be happy if we will, and enjoy the bright sunshine which right-doing always brings into our lives ; but we go on staying in the darkness, saying that, even if we do move, it won't make any real difference, that it's no use trying because our faults will get the upper hand again, and things will be just as black as before. And we make that excuse just because we are too lazy to alter. It is quite time that we left off being so silly. Let us listen to the sweet voices of the New Year. "Leave the darkness," they say ; "come into the light. Come into it by bravely overcoming your faults ; for there is no sunshine to equal the sunny joys of well-doing." This is the lesson which the New Year is trying to teach us

all. Will you not listen to its teaching, and resolve with all your might to profit by it? Make up your minds to be strong, to struggle bravely with bad habits. Then I know that you will, every one of you, have a very, very happy New Year. May God grant it!

## WHAT THE FLOWERS TEACH US

*(Spoken in the Succah on Tabernacles)*

**I** WANT you this morning to listen to a sermon far better than any I could preach. I want you to listen to a sermon by the flowers. We are surrounded by them now as we stand in this Tabernacle. They are all speaking to us, and this is what they are saying: "Look at us and see how good God is, and how wonderful are His works. God has made us grow so that the world might be beautiful, and by its beauty help His human children to be happy. We are signs of His love for you. We are always shouting this truth in your ears; oh, if you would only listen!" Children, this is a splendid sermon, and every one of you, however small, can understand it. Think about it. Each flower tells us of God and of His power; yes, of His power, for the cleverest person in the world couldn't make even so tiny a thing as a daisy or a violet. There are people who can make railways and telephones and wireless telegraphs and flying ships; but there is not one of them who can make a cowslip or a buttercup. Some people can make artificial flowers like those in your hats; but, as you know, they are quite different from the real thing. They are dead, or rather, have never lived, while God's flowers are full of that wonderful thing that we call life. I wonder if you know what we mean when we speak of a miracle; it is something very marvellous,

so marvellous that only God can perform it. Well, one day a very learned man said that the age of miracles was long past, that we only meet them in the Bible. "Do you think so?" said a Jewish teacher who heard him; "then, as you are very clever, make me a growing rose." He knew that this was impossible, and that there could be no greater miracle than the budding trees and the growing flowers; though, because we see them every day, we seldom stop to think how wonderful they really are.

But this is only part of the sermon which the flowers are preaching to us. They tell us of God's power and wisdom, as I have said; but they speak to us, too, of God's love, His endless love. There was once a girl who was born blind, but when she was seventeen years old an operation was performed, and she was able to see. When she looked upon a flower for the first time she said, "I never thought anything could be so beautiful; how dearly God must love us to have made the world so splendid!" And isn't it true? We take all the beauty of the world as a matter of course because we are so used to it; but suppose, like the blind girl, we saw it all of a sudden for the first time. Shouldn't we feel, as she did, that God must love us very much, or He wouldn't try to make us happy? And we do get much happiness from the flowers. Suppose there were no such things—no daisies or buttercups, no lilies or chrysanthemums or roses—shouldn't we all lose a great deal of pleasure?

I heard a sermon once in the synagogue on this Feast of Tabernacles, in which the preacher spoke of what he called "the extra touch." He said that even if the Succah—this Tabernacle, in which we are assembled now—was only a plain little shed, we should still be obeying the command of the Bible, but that making it as gay and pretty as we could was the extra touch, the touch of love. We make it thus gay and pretty because

we want to show reverence and affection for the commands of our religion ; we like to give it an extra touch, something more, that is to say, than we are bound to give, something for love's own sake. It is this extra touch that makes our lives beautiful too, just as it makes our Tabernacle beautiful—not just doing our bare duty, or doing it like a machine, but doing it willingly, gratefully, generously. It is like the kind shopkeeper who, when a child comes to buy some sweets, puts into the scales one or two extra ones, for over-weight. He does it out of sheer love for his tiny customer. You all know something of this extra touch. At our Gift Service every year you not only bring for the little suffering children in the hospital a book or a toy, but the book or toy you love most, and find it hard to part with. This is your extra touch of love. And this extra touch of love our Father in Heaven gives us when He gives us not only food to eat and houses to live in, but beautiful things like the flowers, for the sake of their very beauty and of the joy they bring into our lives. So you see how much the flowers can teach us if we will only open our hearts to their message. Let us all listen to them, and profit by what they teach us, showing our gratitude to God who has sent them to us, by obedience to Him, and by loving service of our fellow-creatures.

## ADAM AND EVE

**T**HIS is about the story of Adam and Eve. You know the story, of course, but that, I think, will only make you more interested in what I am going to say about it. I am going to describe to you the different scenes in the story, and I want you to help me by trying to imagine them as I describe them one after the other. First try to imagine a void, a nothingness, before the world was created. This is very difficult. We can imagine a sandy desert without a living creature, but not a void—just emptiness and darkness, and nothing besides. The second scene is very different. It is now a lovely garden, with splendid fruit hanging from the trees ; there are animals of every kind, all friendly and graceful, and just one man and one woman to enjoy all the loveliness. Let us picture it all as beautiful as we can. In the third scene the man and woman—Adam and Eve—are still in the garden, but they have lost their pleasure in it. At first so happy, they are now unhappy. Why ? Because just one thing only has been forbidden to them among all the many other delightful things that they are permitted to enjoy. We can fancy them eyeing, and touching, and smelling the forbidden fruit. How foolish of them ! for it is really no finer or better than any of the other fruits. But just because it is denied them it seems the best and the most desirable of all, and they long for it most. They must have been—don't you think ?—very much like the young children of our days. They knew

nothing, for they had never been to school ; everything was provided for them without any effort of theirs, just like young children now ; and, also like children—at least some children—they could not be obedient merely because they were told to be. They wanted to know the reason why they must obey ; and, because they were very curious, they wanted to find out what would happen if they did not obey. I have known children like that. I wonder if you have ; and isn't it wonderful to think that, in spite of all those thousands of years since Adam and Eve lived, people are just the same as *they* were, and seem to have learnt nothing about the simplest things—about the simplest things of conduct ? But I must confess, and I am glad to do so, that some few *have* learnt the lesson, and are wiser now because of all they have learnt from the lives of the thousands of people who have lived in the world before them. Poor Adam and Eve had to teach others by their own troubles ! They were quite ready to disobey, and so they fell victims to the voice of the serpent, which told them just what they wanted to believe, namely, that they could do what they liked without fear of consequences. And so they ate the fruit. Now comes scene number four ; but oh, how different it is ! It is the same garden, but all its peace is gone, its loveliness faded. We see Adam and Eve overcome with grief, utterly miserable. They stand ashamed before God, for they know that they have done wrong, and they know that He knows it. We see them trying to throw the blame for their wrong-doing, now upon one another, and now upon the serpent ; but all in vain. For God reads their hearts with His all-seeing eye, and is sure that they alone are to blame. Now follows the fifth and last scene ; Adam and Eve are being sent out of the beautiful garden, where they were once so happy. They are driven out because they are unworthy of its delights—

unworthy because they did not know how to be content, or how to rule their own desires.

No story could be more interesting or more instructive. It is a splendid warning to us all against the power of temptation; it teaches us, as perhaps no other story could, the folly of disobedience. We are all pretty much in the same position as our first parents, Adam and Eve. There is always a serpent near at hand, whispering all sorts of dangerous words into our ears. We don't call it a serpent; we call it temptation, but it is just as dangerous as Adam and Eve's serpent. We say that we have done wrong because we were tempted, as though temptation was something outside us, like the serpent in the old story, and as though that excused us. We lay the blame upon it. But it isn't any more excuse for us than it was for Adam and Eve. Like them, we are all strong enough to conquer temptation if we only make up our minds to do it. Yes, even children are strong enough to do it. You can prove this to be true yourselves. Next time you think of doing wrong, just try and see how successfully you can overcome the intention, the very desire. You will find that you have a wonderful power of self-control; the great thing is to use it. That power of self-control is sometimes called *freedom of will*, or, more simply, *free will*. Free choice is given to us between good and evil, between doing right and doing wrong. No one, and no thing, forces us to sin against our will; we need not do wrong unless we want to. You are none of you like little kittens who drink the milk they have no right to touch because—poor little creatures!—they don't know right from wrong. You *do* know right from wrong, because you are not kittens, but human beings, gifted with mind, and heart, and soul; and you are able to do it if you strongly will to do it. This power is our inheritance as children of God. So

don't listen to the voice of temptation in whatever shape that temptation may come ; yes, and even if it has no visible shape, but is just your own desires urging you to disobey. Be strong and firm. Resist, and you will conquer. Poor Adam and Eve were weak, and sinned. Take warning by their story, and resolve not to be like them. Keep your lovely garden—the garden of goodness, and happiness, and blessedness, which God has planted in your souls. Keep it by keeping your right to have it.

## RAINBOWS

**S**OMEONE who was giving you a little sermon the other day told you that we could all make a lovely rainbow every day by doing some kind deed. I was talking about this afterwards to a little girl who heard the sermon, and she said, "Oh, but you know I couldn't do a kind deed every day; I haven't got enough money." Well, there are a great many grown-ups who seem to think just the same as that little girl did. When they are asked to do a good act they think it means giving money. Of course, it's very nice to be able to give money to those who need it. But there is something that everyone needs more even than money—the poor and the rich alike—and that something is a loving word, and you can all give a loving word, however small your pocket-money may be; for you all have a big supply—so big that you can never come to the end of it. And the best of it is that the more kind words you give to others, the more you will have to give. They seem to get into the way of coming to your lips, and there is no stopping them. It is like the wonderful number of things that a conjuror gets out of a hat; there seems to be no end to them, and we wonder how-ever he could have found room for such a shopful of splendid things.

And kind words do such an immense amount of good. They gladden everyone who hears them, just as the lovely rainbow gladdens everyone who sees it in the sky. And just as the sun makes the rainbow, so the

sunshine of love makes kind words. I want you to think for a moment about the home where only such words are spoken. How sunny it is ! Everybody goes about his or her daily work rejoicing and in good spirits just because love is there. And then think how different is the home where cross and harsh words are constantly heard. It is like the sky black with a thundercloud, and without sun to make a rainbow. No love ; only bad temper and ugly thoughts and feelings. If you think of the tremendous difference there is between those two homes, and between the lives of those who live in them, you will understand the power of kind words. You will understand how those who speak them really do a good and kind deed, a far better deed than that of giving away money to a poor person. A far better deed, I say, because a much more difficult one. If we have money, it is easy to give some of it to others ; we hardly miss it, perhaps. But to speak kindly and gently, however greatly we are put out, is much, very much, harder. It means keeping a tight hand upon ourselves, and not letting ourselves go ; it is like putting on the brake that grips the bicycle hard when going down hill. It means being tender and gentle even with those who have annoyed or harmed us. Yes, it is difficult ; but just because it is so difficult it is glorious.

Let me tell you a story about this. It is quite a true one. There was a boy who was so very lame that he could hardly walk. He used to sit with flowers in a street in Hampstead. A little girl named Marjory, whom I knew very well, used to pass him every day on her way to school. Sometimes she bought a bunch of flowers from him ; but, whether she bought anything or not, she always stopped a moment to say a cheerful "good morning," and to ask him how he was. After a time Marjory was ill, and couldn't go to school, and the boy sadly missed her morning's

greeting. At last he managed to find out where she lived, and behold, one day there lay on the doorstep of the house a bunch of flowers wrapped in a piece of white paper ; on the paper was written in large letters, " These flowers are for the little kind lady ; her kindness has taught me that God cares for me." And every morning, till Marjory was well again, a little bunch of flowers was laid on the doorstep. Wouldn't it be lovely if we all, by our words, could teach others the same beautiful lesson: the lesson that God thinks lovingly of them, and wants them to be happy ? Anyway, let us all try. The first rainbow, you will remember, God put into the sky to tell people that, though they might do wrong, He would still lovingly forgive them, that He would never forget them, but send day and night, and summer and winter, and heat and cold, for blessing, and for the very purpose of showing that He did not forget them. Let us strive to be like Him, and to bring the rainbow of love into the lives of others, so that we may bless them as God has blessed us. Ah, how little it costs to make other people happy ! Just a gentle word or a cheery smile. And where is the poor person too poor to give it ?

## PEACE BETWEEN NATIONS

**O**UR room, as you see, is decorated to-day with a big bill, calling attention to a Peace Meeting which has been got up by some women in London, and is to be held next week. I would like you all to tell your fathers and mothers about this Meeting, and then, perhaps, they will go to it, and by their sympathy help those of us who have got it up. This morning I am going to speak to you about the subject which will be considered at the Meeting—Peace Between Nations. This may seem a strange time to speak about Peace, for next week we shall be keeping the Feast of Chanukah in memory of the brave Maccabees, who fought and died so gloriously on the battlefield. But there is really nothing strange in praising peace one week and doing honour to the memory of gallant soldiers the next. There are times when men have no choice but to fight. They cannot do otherwise when their country and their loved ones, their freedom and their religion, are in danger. To hold aloof then, and to say that we must have peace at any price, would be not only silly, but wrong. And it was just for their homes, and their freedom, and their religion, that the Maccabees drew the sword. It is right that every lover of peace should be prepared for war, because being prepared for war is the best way of ensuring peace. No country is anxious to attack the one that is best prepared to defend

itself. So that, fond as I am of peace, anxious as I am that an end should be put to war altogether, I should like to see every boy, Jew as well as Christian, join the Lads' Brigade, or something of the sort, and learn how to fight for his country, and be ready to do so when he is grown-up, if ever unfortunately the need should arise. And I should like also to see every girl learn how to nurse those wounded in war. If, happily, she is never called upon to use her knowledge exactly in that way, it would still be useful to her in nursing the sick in her own home or in the homes of the poor.

But all this does not mean that peace is not a good thing—what we call the ideal thing—something to be admired and loved, something to be striven for with all our might. War, at best, is what is called a “necessary evil,” something that we have to put up with from time to time lest worse things happen; and what we ought all to aim at is to make it an unnecessary evil, to bring all people to see that it is a calamity, and a sin, and a blunder, and so to pave the way to the ending of war once and for all. This is the object of the Meeting which is to be held next week. What it is going to try to do is to get every country which has a quarrel with another, instead of fighting about it, to meet the other peaceably, and try to settle matters in that way. If this is rather difficult for some of you to understand, I will give you an illustration of what I mean. Suppose two schoolboys have a dispute about something; they will say, perhaps, “Let's fight it out and see who is in the right.” But suppose, instead of that, they agree to call in some of their companions, and all try to find out the best way of settling the question without coming to blows. Wouldn't that really be a more decent and indeed a more sensible plan? I say more sensible because if the boys did fight, all

that would be proved would be, not which of them was right, but which of them was stronger—which was not the question at all. And it is just the same with war. All that it proves is not which nation has justice on its side, but which is the more powerful. It hardly proves even that. The nation that wins is only shown to have the best ships and the best guns ; the nation that is beaten may really be the stronger and the braver in spite of being beaten. Well, that hardly seems worth spending so much money for, and wasting so many valuable lives. Lives are much too precious to be sacrificed merely because two countries quarrel, and the money could be far better spent in relieving the misery, or increasing the well-being and the progress, of the people at large. I know that it is difficult for boys to take this view. I was speaking to one about the subject last week, and he said, “ Oh, but I want to be a soldier ; I want to wear a uniform and march to a big band.” I can understand that boy. A uniform is very grand, and a big band is very exciting and inspiring. But if that boy had been a little older he would have known that war means something else, something very different. A brave man who had fought successfully in a great battle was asked if it was not a glorious moment for him when he saw the enemy retreat. “ Glorious ! ” he said, “ how can anybody think about the glory when he sees about him hundreds of men, dead or dying, and thinks that for all of them there are many others made desolate by their death ? And what was almost equally piteous,” he added, “ was the sight of the poor horses lying about groaning in agony, and no one able to do anything for them—the poor horses who couldn’t understand what it all meant ! ”

No ; war does not mean only fine uniforms and brass bands. And as to the glory of it, well, if you want to do

brave and glorious deeds, there are plenty to be done by saving life, not destroying it. The fireman who rushes into a burning house to save the inmates; the miner, who, at the risk of his life, goes down into the choking air of a pit to rescue a comrade; the man who plunges into the sea to save another, or stands aside when the ship is going down so that the women and children may be saved first—each of these is surely quite as brave as the soldier in the front of the battle. Perhaps he is even braver, for he does his heroic deed calmly and deliberately, without the excitement of battle to urge him on, knowing all the time that he may be going to his death. No; men need not be slaughtered so that heroes may be made. “Peace has its victories as well as war”; and it has its heroes as well. Let us, then, with all our hearts, pray and work for the establishment of friendship and brotherhood among the nations, asking God, in the words of our Prayer-book—God, “who dwells amid the peace of Heaven,” to “grant peace unto us and unto all His children,” and doing our best, by our own lives, to make the prayer real and successful. It is a duty which we Jews ought to be foremost in performing. Many hundreds of years ago the great Prophets of the Bible—some of the finest souls that Israel has produced—taught that duty. They had an unconquerable faith in the brotherhood of man, and foretold the time when war should cease entirely out of the world, and all peoples be joined together in the bond of unbroken peace. “Nations,” they said, “shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks.” Strife should be forgotten, and men “should not learn war any more.” This happy state of things came to be called, in course of time, the “Kingdom of God”—the rule of God, of righteousness, and peace, and love over the hearts and lives of mankind. A beautiful

name, is it not ? But the thing, when it comes at last, will be more beautiful still. For the sake of our Judaism, and for the sake of the happiness of our fellow-men, let us strive to bring that happy state of things one little step nearer.

## OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS JEWS

**N**EXT week will be the Feast of Purim, when the Book of Esther will be read in the synagogues. The Book teaches us many lessons. One of them is the power that we all have to make, by our own conduct, the name of Jew worthy or unworthy, respected or despised. Children, this is a great responsibility for us—so great that we have to put forth every effort to lead good lives, not only for our own sake, but also for the sake of our people. Yes, for the sake of our people. What we Jews do, and what sort of lives we live, has a great effect upon the lives of all other Jews. Their happiness, perhaps their very safety, is in our hands. For other people judge us Jews—form their opinion of the Jewish character and even of the Jewish religion—by the characters and the lives of individual Jews. A worthy Jew gives Israel and Judaism a good name; an unworthy Jew gives them a bad one. So, as you see, we are by no means free to do what we like. There is an old story that tells how once a man, who was sailing in a boat with many other persons, began to bore a hole under his seat. The others noticed what he was doing and begged him to stop. “Why should I stop?” he asked; “I am only making a hole under my own seat.” “Yes,” they replied; “but if the water comes through that hole, we shall all be drowned.” It is so with us Jews. Our acts are our own; but they may seriously injure others besides ourselves

—our fellow-Jews who have to share in the shame which we have brought upon ourselves. And in the same way we have to bear the shame of other Jews' misdeeds. Some of you may think it very hard that we should have this responsibility; but then you must remember that all the greater is the honour. The harder it seems to have to suffer for the wrong-doing of others, the nobler it is to accept the hardship and the unfairness. Nobler still is it to resolve, as the result of the hardship, that we will so live as to protect our people from the injury that any wrong act of ours might inflict upon them. Let me remind you of the story in honour of which we keep this Feast of Purim. Because Mordecai, who was only one among the Jews, did something to displease Haman, something which Haman regarded as an insult, he thought, or pretended to think, that all the Jews were insulting and wicked, and made up his mind to kill them all. On the other hand, because Mordecai saved Ahasuerus' life, and because Esther pleaded with him so earnestly and so bravely for her people, he spared the Jews. And just as it was in those days, so it is now. The whole Jewish people has to suffer for the faults of a few men or women; and, on the other hand, it profits by the good deeds of a few men or women.

And there is something more besides this. We belong to a people whose duty and mission it is to teach religion and goodness to the whole world. If one of us does wrong, then it not only gives our people a bad name, but prevents them from carrying out their mission—that of helping others to live the noble life. For we cannot help others to be good if we are not good ourselves. Besides, if our religion does not make us good, how can we ask others to be religious? This may be difficult for you to understand; so I will try to make it easier. There were once two boys—cousins—

who went to different schools. It happened that each of them was the only Jewish boy in the school. One of them was honest, and truthful, and conscientious, and his schoolfellows liked and respected all Jews for his sake ; they judged all Jews by his pattern. But the other boy was deceitful and selfish, and so his schoolfellows, judging all Jewish people by him, got a dislike for all Jews, and refused to say a good word for any of them. "What a shame !" you will say, "how unjust !" Well, it isn't just, of course, but I suppose it is natural, and it is what always happens. So, children, that is one great lesson I want you to learn from the Book of Esther. It is that each one of us, by his or her own conduct, can powerfully help either to make or mar the good name and the well-being of our people.

We learn another lesson, too, from the story. Esther, as you know, had the courage to declare her religion, although she knew, since all the Jews were to be killed, that it might mean death for her. I want you to be brave as she was, and never to hesitate to declare that you are Jews, even though you may have to suffer for it in some way or other. Fortunately, we live in a country where we are not persecuted because we are Jews ; but there are many things besides persecution that we have to bear bravely. It requires courage to own that one's religion is different from that of one's neighbours, and many people lack that courage. It's very silly to be so timid, because Judaism is the finest of all religions, and not only should we be proud to say that we possess such a religion, but we should remember that our neighbours will respect us just for being proud of it. I should like to tell you a story about this. John, a Jewish boy, went to a school where most of the boys were Christians. One day one of his schoolfellows, angry with him for something he had done, called out "Jew, Jew," thinking to annoy him. But John took no notice ; he only

smiled. A week afterwards the boy came and said, "I like you, John, and I am sorry I called you Jew the other day; I hope you didn't mind." "Mind?" John answered; "what was there to mind? Would you mind if anyone called you a king or a prince? Of course you wouldn't. Well, I am prouder to be a Jew than you would be if anyone called you a king or a prince." I think that was splendid. And, children, if we were all as proud of our religion as John was, and if we made up our minds not to do anything to bring the slightest discredit upon it, if we showed the world that to be a Jew was to be all that is good and noble, then our people would be respected, and our religion would also seem good and noble, as it ought to do, in the eyes of the world. So, you see, we Jews have two reasons for being good: one is because to be good is right, and fine, and beautiful, and the other is because it helps our people and our Judaism.

## ON LOYALTY

**M**Y subject is loyalty. Do you know what it really means? I asked a boy this question once, and he said, "Oh, it means standing up, and taking off your cap, when they play 'God Save the King.'" Well, that is a way of showing one particular kind of loyalty—that which we owe to our King. But there are other kinds of loyalty demanded of us. There is loyalty to our country, to our religion, and to our God. So, as you see, it is a less easy affair than just standing up, and taking off one's hat when the band is playing. Even loyalty to one's King means much more than that; it means faithfulness to the Throne, unselfish effort to defend and uphold it if it is attacked. But I want especially to speak to you about one of the other kinds of loyalty. I mean loyalty to our religion. You know that we all have to give up something if we would be true to our Judaism; but you also know that the harder a duty is the more honour there is in performing it. Now, when you are young, and later, too, when you will be grown up, you must make sacrifices if you are to be staunch and faithful to your religion. It is so much easier to do as the majority, that is the greater number, do, instead of going with the minority, that is the few. It is much easier, as some of you have found out by actual experience, to swim *with* the current than *against* it. Those of your companions who are not Jews may think you odd and strange because you have a different religion from theirs, and

practise it ; but you must not mind that. Be loyal to your religion and, if their opinion is worth anything at all, they will only respect you for your loyalty, for your courage, for your "grit." Keeping the Sabbath day is difficult for us because it falls on Saturday, and not on Sunday, the general day of rest, and very often, on that account, you will be extra tempted to work, or to amuse yourselves in wrong ways, on *your* day of rest. And it is just then, when temptation is especially strong, that you must resolve to resist more mightily still, to be really loyal. For the stronger the temptation, the more fiercely must you fight it ; and the more fiercely you fight it, the braver and the stronger you show yourselves to be. A savage thinks that if he kills a lion some of the lion's strength goes into him. Well, temptation is a lion, and in overcoming it we show a lion's strength, and, what is more, keep it. For every time we overcome temptation our moral strength grows, our character grows. The reward of doing one fine act, say the old Jewish teachers, is power to do another. Nor is it a question only of strength. Every time we do a fine act, every time we are faithful to Duty, we get our reward. Not a reward in the lower sense of the word, not a reward in money or in pleasure, but in a peaceful conscience, in the joyous thought that we have done what we could, that we have been true when the forces that would make us false were so powerful.

And this loyalty—or faithfulness—besides bringing us peace and joy, besides helping us to live our lives nobly, helps to make them beautiful. Beauty of body is all very well in its way ; but a beautiful life, grace of character, is far better. The one fades away with the years, the other remains always—even grows with the years. And what people value and love us for is, after all, not how we look, but what we are ; the only real charm is goodness. Here is a story about loyalty. Once, after a

battle, a young officer was found in a ditch, dying of his wounds. The enemy's ambulance came round, and found him, but he begged so earnestly to remain there, and die in peace, that they yielded to his entreaties. When he was dead they found the flag of his regiment under him. He had covered it with his dying body, wishing to save it from falling into the enemy's hands. His desire was respected. Instead of taking the flag, the enemy wound it round the young hero's body, and buried him in it with military honours. Here is another story of the same kind. In a fight at sea a brave young officer was hit by a shot, and fell, dying, on the deck of his ship. As he was being carried down the hatchway, he issued, with weak voice, his last order: "Don't give up the ship." He was loyalty itself. It was his ruling passion. Let us all resolve to be loyal, as these heroes were, to guard faithfully the banner of Israel. As long as we have life let us exhort our companions by words and, above all, by deeds, not to give up the ship—the grand old ship of Judaism, which has weathered many a storm, outlived many a desperate fight.

## THE POWER OF HABIT

**T**O-DAY I am going to speak about evil habits, and how big things—big, bad things—come from small beginnings. I am going to speak to you about this because I think all of us—both children and grown-ups—are too ready to think that little things, especially little faults, don't matter very much. I want to show you that they do matter very much indeed. An old proverb says that no one becomes wicked all of a sudden. All bad people were young and innocent once, just as you all are. They began committing little faults, and fancied that, because they were little, they were of no consequence. An old Jewish writer has said that bad habits are, at first, like threads of silk, which we can almost blow away, but that they get stronger and stronger as time goes on, till they become at last like very thick ropes, which we cannot break, and which bind us so tight that we cannot get free.

Just think about it, and you will see it is true. Suppose you got into the habit of saying what was not exactly the truth. Well, if directly you found you had got into the way of doing this, you made up your mind to break yourself of it, you could do so easily, just as easily as you could break a silken thread; a firm resolve always to tell the strict truth in future, and you would be free, the thread would be broken. But suppose you did nothing, but went on and on, caring nothing for the truth; then, at last, you would be tied up as

with a thick rope. The habit of being untruthful would have grown up with you, and a long and hard struggle would be needed to escape from it. The rope would bind you tight. And so it is with every other ugly quality—ill-temper, idleness, selfishness, disobedience, and all the rest of them. I do want you all not to think that any of them is only a little fault that you can easily cure whenever you like, that you can take your own time about it, and that, therefore, you needn't bother. If you think like that, each fault, small as it may be, will go on growing until, like the famous beanstalk in the story, which grew into a tree from one tiny little bean, it becomes a very big and serious fault indeed. You have all seen a great river, our own Thames, for example, which is deep enough to float enormous ships. Well, all these big rivers start by being just tiny streams, so tiny that we could stop it with one hand. But the stream goes on and on, always getting wider and stronger, until at last it swells into a great river, and broadens into the sea. Well, this is exactly the way with our faults. As I have said, they are like heavy chains about our bodies, and it seems as if we should never be strong enough to free ourselves from them.

But let us remember this also : we need never lose heart and fancy that we cannot free ourselves ; it needs only a strong will and a big pull, and God will give us the necessary strength if we only ask His help and ask it with all our hearts. Perhaps you will understand what I mean if I tell you about a little play I once saw, which interested me very much. I want you to try and imagine the scene as I saw it. There were a great many boys and girls of all ages shut up in a lovely garden ; they were not only imprisoned within high walls, which prevented them from getting out, but they could not move about even in the garden itself. For they were bound in chains. They could not run along the nice well-kept paths or

on the soft springing grass, nor climb the trees or pluck the flowers. Some of the chains were so heavy that the children could not move at all. On those chains were written the names of different faults—greediness on some, bad temper on others, laziness or untruthfulness on others, and so on; and the bigger the boys and girls were, the heavier were the chains that bound them. All the children seemed dull and unhappy although the garden was so lovely. It was not at all a pleasant sight, as you may well imagine. But presently there came the sound of beautiful singing from outside the garden—the singing of hymns that the children knew; and, as it came to an end, the gates of the garden suddenly opened, and an angel came in. She was very sorry for these children who were unable to walk and jump about as happy children do, and she very kindly told them how they could get rid of their chains, and be free and joyous once more. She told them how *they* could get rid of them, not how *she* would get rid of them. It was *they* who were to set themselves free. She spoke to them of unselfishness, and kindness, and pity; she spoke to them of God. And, as she spoke, the chains seemed to get smaller and lighter, and at last they fell off, and the children were free—free to enjoy the delights of the garden, and to be happy in their freedom. It all came from the gentle words of the angel, which touched the hearts of the children so deeply that they were able to throw off their fetters by their own efforts. Well, life is a garden, full of lovely things, of opportunities for happiness. Would we enjoy those lovely things? Would we be truly happy? Then let us set ourselves free—free from the evil in our own hearts, which binds us about as with chains, making us miserable slaves. We can do so if we like. It is all a matter of will and prayer. Go on willing; go on praying to God to aid your will. It is no easy matter; you may fail over and over

again just as one who climbs a steep hill slips back over and over again. But, like him, set your teeth and struggle on, resolving not to be beaten, and you will reach the top at last. And the joy of reaching it is all the keener because of the struggle. Perhaps that is why goodness has been made so difficult. All its joy comes from the very thought that we have had to fight for it.

## “GOODY-GOODY”

“GOODY-GOODY”—I daresay you know that expression. I should like to talk to you about it. It is an expression which I think has done more harm to boys and girls, and especially to boys, than any other I know. I wonder who invented it! Whoever it was, I do wish that he had invented something more useful. Whenever a young person tries more than usually hard to do right he is in danger of having this adjective hurled at him. I should respect the boys and girls who didn't mind, but stuck to their right-doing in spite of it; but I am afraid I should find very few. I do believe that an ordinary schoolboy would rather be found guilty of positive wrong-doing than of being goody-goody. And this would just prove that he hadn't the moral courage to stand sneers and ridicule for what he knew was right. For it is nothing but cowardly not to do what we know is right just because we are afraid of being laughed at. In another address<sup>1</sup> I have reminded you of the story in “Tom Brown's School Days.” One boy, by bravely persisting in saying his prayers every night, in spite of the jeers of a whole dormitory, in time silences them, and wins over the jeerers themselves to pray regularly in their turn. It is so always. Refuse to be laughed out of right-doing—be deaf to the cry “Goody-goody!”—and you will bring over to your side, sooner or later, the

<sup>1</sup> On “The Power of Example.”

very people who have done the laughing. Joseph, you will remember, was called a dreamer by his brothers. If they had lived in this time, and in this country, they would no doubt have called him "Goody-goody." His thoughts were always fixed on the sky and on God; he was always trying to please his old father, while his brothers liked to go their own way. They laughed at him, and thought him a poor creature, who would never get on in the world. But how differently things turned out! The lad they despised became a great ruler, and they had to kneel before him, in the after years, in fear and trembling. If Joseph had one great merit it was that he had "grit." Jeers and sneers—temptation of every kind—could not shake his faithfulness to duty. They fell away from him like arrows from a coat of mail. Others, in more recent times, have been like him. There was John Howard, for example, who never rested until he had made the condition of the prisons better; there was Wilberforce, who helped to put an end to slavery. Both men were laughed at at first; but, nothing daunted, they went on pegging away until they succeeded at last. They succeeded because they vowed that they would never fail. They had countless people against them; but they won them all over to their side by sheer persistence, by determining that neither numbers nor ridicule should hinder them in their efforts to serve their fellow-men.

The names of these good men live in history; but numbers of good deeds are being performed every day silently and secretly, so that we don't even know the names of the doers of them. But that hasn't mattered to them; they have gone on doing right simply because it *was* right, and they looked neither for reward nor for fame. Once, at a cricket match, some of the players, in a pause in the game, were throwing their balls at a tiny bird that couldn't fly. A man among the crowd

ran across the field and rescued the bird. The cricketers jeered, but the crowd cheered. The man didn't care for either one or the other. He had seen the poor little creature being tormented, and he wasn't going to stand it, no matter what happened. Centuries before that, a man, during a savage fight in a Roman arena, stood up and cried "Shame" on the vast multitude for permitting such brutality. He alone did it among that huge assemblage. It is said that these horrible fights began to get less frequent from that day. Only the brave protest of just one man ! And yet how much it achieved ! Now I will tell you about a school-boy—we will call him Harry—who, boy though he was, showed great moral courage. Some of his schoolfellows were once teasing a kitten just for what they called amusement. No doubt it had never occurred to them to think that even kittens can suffer pain just as human beings can. Well, Harry wasn't going to see even a kitten suffer if he could help it. So before the other boys knew what he was doing he caught up the small creature in his arms and, crying, "You shan't hurt it," ran off with it. The boys could only do one thing ; they shouted after him, "Boo, goody-goody !" Harry stopped for a moment. "I don't mind what you call me," he said ; "if it is being goody-goody to save this poor little thing from being tormented, I am proud of the name." Well, this was true courage, and you, who love courage more perhaps than anything else, will surely imitate it. I don't want you to be conceited, and to think that you are better than your companions, and so look down upon them. That is not being goody-goody, although some persons might say it is. I should rather call it being "baddy-baddy." I know there isn't such a word, but it is quite as good as the other, to say the least. Just don't think about yourselves at all. Think only of what is right, and have the courage to do it, no matter what people may call you,

or say of you. It is the sort of courage which we Jews have shown for thousands of years. What is the history of our people but the story of persistent loyalty to truth and right, to our belief in God and our ideas of duty, steadily maintained in the teeth of a hostile world? Would we be loyal Jews? Then let us be thus brave always, in small things as well as big ones.

## SACRIFICE

**I** HEARD someone tell you the other day that if we made sacrifices—gave up, that is to say, what we wanted ourselves for the sake of others—we should make our lives not only holier, but happier. At first this may seem a little difficult to understand. “How can we be happy,” you may ask, “if we give up the very things we want ourselves?” But I believe that, if you think about it, you will be able to say, from your own experience, that what you were told the other day is true. Just try and remember. You have, now and then, given away something that you prized and valued very much in order that someone else who needed that something even more than you did might be pleased and helped. Well, when you did that, was it not one of the happiest moments in your lives? You gave up something that was very dear to you out of pity, out of love. And I always think that it is something to be very grateful for that God, in His great mercy, puts love into our hearts, and then counts it as a virtue, as a merit, in us when we show that love. How hard it would be if, instead of the love coming naturally and easily, we had to fight for it! We ought, all of us, young and old alike, to be thankful for the delight we get from just doing good, from helping and pleasing others who are less fortunate than ourselves. Is there any happiness that can compare with it? As I have often reminded you, if you have something given to you—a toy, a new hat, a smart tie—that you have been wanting very much, you feel very

delighted ; but, after a time, when you have grown used to the gift, you don't care for it quite as much as you did at first. But suppose instead of keeping something you like, you give it away, so that somebody else may have the happiness of possessing it, then things are quite different. Then instead of your pleasure becoming less, it becomes bigger, and goes on becoming bigger. For whenever you think of the person whom your giving up, your self-sacrifice, has made happy, you feel delighted, and the delight grows every time you feel it. I don't mean to say that we can, any of us, give up what we treasure most without regret ; but then, if we did, the giving up would be no sacrifice. There would be no merit in it. We can all understand the feelings of the little girl who was going to send her favourite doll, one she cherished with particular affection, to a small crippled child she had heard about. She cuddled the doll, and bade her "good-bye" with such a flood of tears, that her mother said, "If you feel so much, dear, about parting with your doll, don't give her away." "Oh, mummie," the child said, sobbing, "I can't help crying at letting her go, but I should cry much more if I kept her, and didn't let the poor little child have her. I am feeling quite happy, mummie dear, though I am crying, because I know the poor little cripple will be so happy."

Let me tell you one of my favourite stories about sacrifice. Some years ago there was great distress in Lancashire ; there was no work, and thousands of people were starving. A fund was raised to help them, and subscriptions were to be sent to the Town Hall. One morning, when the secretary was sitting there, a very poor man brought a small packet wrapped up in a piece of newspaper. The secretary opened it, and found in it just 1s. 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. "Here, sir," said the man, "take this for the starving people ; it is our tea and sugar."

The secretary looked hard at the man, for he did not understand what he meant. "You see, sir," the man went on in explanation, "me and my wife we haven't got any money to spare, for we've got six children with awful big appetites; so we thought what we could do. We wanted to help, but didn't know just how to do it. And then my old woman, who is always very sensible, said, 'Jim, let's drink water without the tea and the sugar, and give the money we save to the poor starving folk.' And that is what we did, and I've brought you the money, and I hope to bring the same every week. The water is very cold, and not very tasty; but, when we drink it, my old woman smiles at me, and I smile back at her, and we drink to the health of the starving folk." I am very fond of that story. I can just fancy the man and his wife sitting down to breakfast on a cold winter's morning and smiling at each other as they went without their usual cups of nice hot tea, because they knew that by their self-sacrifice they were helping others worse off than themselves. I should like you all to have the delight that these poor but kind people had—the help that comes from giving up some precious thing for the sake of others. Think from time to time of those who have so little to brighten their lives, and then think of all the sunshine that falls upon yours. And, when you do so, you cannot do anything else but resolve that, as long as you live, you will do your utmost, no matter what self-denial it costs you, to help, out of sheer gratitude, those of your fellow-creatures who are sad and suffering.

## TRUTHFULNESS

**I** AM going to speak to you this morning about truthfulness. There is so much to say about it that I might go on talking to you all day and then should not have finished. But then, perhaps, you would be tired long before I had done. So I must try and see how much I can tell you in a few words. The Bible is always teaching us lessons about truthfulness. In the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus we read, "Ye shall not lie one to another"; in the fifty-first Psalm it says, "Behold, Thou, O God, desirest truth in the inward parts"; and again in the hundred-and-first Psalm we read, "He that speaketh falsehood shall not tarry in My sight." Again, in the twelfth chapter of Proverbs we are told that "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord"; and the Prophet Zechariah, in his eighth chapter, cries, "Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour." And there are many other similar verses in Scripture. What the Bible tells us about this subject we know in our own hearts to be true. The duty of truthfulness is written in every conscience—conscience, which is, so to speak, the tablets of God's Law placed in the sanctuary of the soul.

Now what does truthfulness mean? Does it mean merely abstaining from telling falsehoods? I think it means something more than that, for it is quite possible to be untruthful without saying a word. We can *act* untruthfully. Let me give you an instance. Suppose, when a poor woman goes to a baker to buy

bread, he gives her an ounce or two short. She takes it, thinking she has full weight. She has been deceived. So, without saying a word, the baker has acted a lie, besides robbing the poor woman. Again, suppose a man, coming from abroad, hides a box of cigars at the bottom of his trunk, so that they may not be found, and he may get off paying duty on them. He, too, is acting a lie, though he may not speak a single word. But these examples will not mean very much to you ; for children are not tempted to give short weight, or to smuggle things through the Custom-house. So I will try to give you an example of untruthfulness which you can all fully understand. Suppose, when visitors come to your house, you are very polite, and nice, and good-tempered ; but suppose also that, when you are alone with the members of your family, you are rude, and grumpy, and cross, thus giving the visitors the idea that you are nice and good-tempered always. Don't you see that in such a case, putting on, as you do, these " company-manners," and putting them off when the company have gone, is acting an untruth ? It is trying to make people believe that we are different from what we really are, and seeking praise that we don't deserve. We are told in the fifteenth Psalm that he that would dwell in God's holy hill must speak the truth in his heart. These words put the whole lesson in a nutshell. We must speak the truth *in our heart*. It is not enough to be careful that we *say* what is true ; what we have to see to is that we *act* the truth, for acts may deceive as well as words.

I will tell you two stories to illustrate just what I mean. There was a school which had a lending library, from which the children were allowed to take books home to read. One day a girl brought a book back which she had read at home. The teacher was about to return it to the bookcase when the child stopped her.

“I want you to look at the first page,” she said; “I am very sorry, but I have had an accident, and I have torn it.” “I am sorry too, Rose,” answered the teacher; “but I am glad because you have been straightforward and told me.” Rose, you see, need not have said anything about it, for the chances were that her carelessness would never have been found out; but she was too truthful to keep silent. And then the second story. Once a schoolboy got up from the very bottom to the top of his class for spelling a hard word which all the other boys had spelt wrong. Of course, he was very delighted at his success. But just when he had taken his place at the top of his class the teacher wrote out the word on the blackboard so that all the children might see how to spell it. Then the boy saw, to his dismay, that the teacher could not have heard him well, for he had not spelt the word right after all. It was a great temptation to say nothing; but he did not hesitate for a moment. “Please, sir,” he said, “I must go down again; I didn’t spell it like that.” “Yes, you must,” the master said; “but, though you may not spell well, you can do something more important still—you can speak the truth.” It is a splendid thing—don’t you think?—if everyone can believe what we say just because it is we who say it, knowing, as they do from experience, that we are truth-loving, and scorn to say what is false. On the other hand, the punishment for telling one falsehood is that we are not believed afterwards even if we do speak the truth. It is told of an old Greek philosopher that when once, at a trial, he was going to give evidence, and was about to take the usual oath, the judge stopped him. “No, Xenocrates,” he said, “you need not take the oath, for we can trust your word without it; you are known to be a man of truth.” That was indeed a fine reputation, and it is in the power of all of us to win it in our turn.

## ABOUT DARKNESS

**S**OME little time ago a child asked me to speak about darkness. At first it seemed to me a very difficult thing to talk about ; but when I began to think over it I found it was easier than I thought. There are a great many lessons that we can learn from darkness. Let us try to find out some of them. We are told in the first chapter of Genesis that God created light ; but if we think a moment we shall understand that before He created it there must have been darkness, and light was all the more beautiful because of the darkness that existed before it. Light is lovely and something to be very grateful for ; so, too, is darkness. Can you imagine what it would be like if the sun were always shining, if the sky were always cloudless and blue, and there was no shade, no grey, anywhere ? Wouldn't our eyes get dreadfully tired ? And fancy going to bed in the broad daylight ! We might shut our eyes, and at last, when we were very tired, we might go to sleep ; but it wouldn't be the same quiet sleep that we are used to, and when we woke up in the morning our eyes would ache, and we shouldn't feel really rested. It is a wonderful proof of God's great love for us that, after the dazzling light and glare of the day, the night comes, and we can sleep all the more peacefully just because it is night, just because it is dark.

And the darkness is all the more precious just because it has followed the light, even as the morning light is all the more delicious because of the darkness which has

gone before it. And yet I have known children who didn't like the darkness, who when, as sometimes happens to all of us, they lay awake at night, hated being alone, and even felt afraid. But then I don't think that those children could have been taught that God is always lovingly watching over them and keeping them from real harm. Or, if they had been taught this, they couldn't have understood that although He is always near us, He is never so near as when we are alone and trusting in His Fatherly care and protection. If we all felt this, we should be glad to wake in the darkness and remember that we were not alone, but safe with Him. You remember the words of our beautiful hymn, the *Adon Olam* :—"The Lord is with me ; I will not fear." Then, again, it always seems to me that we can pray well in the darkness. Sometimes, before the service begins on Friday evenings, I go into the synagogue, and as I sit there in the twilight God seems nearer to me than at any other time. So that those Psalmists spoke only the bare truth when they described God as dwelling in the darkness, wrapped round with clouds. Darkness, as I said before, makes us value light all the more, and light makes us put a greater value on darkness. Some years ago, when I was abroad, it happened that the sun shone every day, and all day, for weeks together ; even the nights were hardly dark, and our eyes got so tired of the constant glare that, when the clouds came at last, and the sky grew dark, we delighted in the welcome change. And I have heard people who have travelled in the East, with its brilliant sunshine, say that they had often longed for night to come so that the kindly darkness might, for a time, drive away the unbearable glare. The truth is that both light and darkness are alike necessary for happiness. And then just as darkness makes light all the more welcome, so troubles make our joys more joyous still. There are so many good

things in life that we shouldn't care about if we had them always. The loss of them helps us to value them better when they are given back to us. We don't see how precious a gift health is until we lose it, and we are never so glad as when our gladness comes from the ending of pain.

Yet one more lesson we can learn from darkness : it is that we can make the dark places in life bright and beautiful by being cheerful, and patient, and kind. There is a little girl I know very well who does this. She is but a child, like each of you, but she is not as lucky as you are, for she is lame and cannot run about, and sometimes for weeks together she is in pain and has to remain in bed. No doubt you would think that her life is all darkness ; but she lights it up by her cheerfulness and courage. I have never heard her complain when she sees her little friends leaping about and playing games while all the time she has to keep lying still and suffering. On the contrary, she seems quite glad that others should enjoy themselves and be happy. Children, surely God is with her in her dark hours, helping her to bear her pain, helping her from out of the darkness of her affliction to shed light and joy on those around her. Out of her pain she helps others ; you, more fortunate, may do so out of your joy. Remember this, and resolve that your cheerfulness, your good temper, your kindness, and your love shall turn darkness into light, and sorrow into gladness, not only for yourselves, but for others also. Cheerfulness and good temper may seem little things ; but they can work wonders. What a difference a tiny night-light makes in a dark room ! And in the same way what blessing may a smile or a kind word bring into some life upon which the shadows have fallen !

## OTHER PEOPLE'S HAPPINESS

I AM going to speak to you about happiness, about the happiness of other people. Perhaps some of you will think that's not nearly as interesting and important as your own happiness ; but in reality it is the same thing. For we can't be happy ourselves if we know other people are miserable ; and so, if only in order to be happy ourselves, we have to try to make other people happy. I want to show you how you can do this ; and I'll try to do so by telling you a story. It is about a little girl who, at the time I am speaking of, was indeed very little, for she was only about six years old. She went to a school where boys and girls were taught together. One day a new boy came. He was very ugly, and squinted with both eyes. Besides this he was rather stupid, and couldn't learn his lessons ; not a boy that one could violently fall in love with, was he ? So you will not be surprised to hear that the other children left him to himself ; they refused to play with him, and hardly spoke a word to him. One day Mimi, the little girl I am speaking of, saw him standing alone in the playground, doing nothing and looking very miserable, while the other children were romping about, and enjoying themselves hugely. Well, she couldn't stand this, so she said to the others, " Willie (that was the new boy) can't help squinting and being stupid. He would be different if he could, and I am going to talk to him and play with him." And so she did, and some of the others followed her example, and Willie's

misery was over. Now I wonder if you would all have done what Mimi did, or if you would have left Willie to himself, and have gone on playing and having a good time, without caring for the lonely boy. I hope you would have been like Mimi, but, anyway, now that you know of it, you can all follow her example when you have the opportunity.

Remember that other people's happiness depends a great deal upon you. You can help them in so many ways, and one way is always open to you—I mean helping them to be happy just by saying a kind word or two. Do you know the fairy story which tells how once a poor old woman met a young girl in a wood, and asked her to help her, as she was so ill and thirsty. The girl's only answer to the old woman's request was a harsh and rough refusal. Presently another young girl came along, who *did* help the poor woman—helped her just by speaking kindly to her. Now the old dame was really a fairy, and she promised that, as a reward for the young girl's kindness, pearls and diamonds should drop from her mouth every time she spoke, but, when the other girl opened her lips, toads and all kinds of nasty crawling things should fall from them. The one girl enriched and delighted everybody; the other hurt and saddened everybody. This, of course, is only a fairy story, and you all know that there are not really such beings as fairies and, therefore, that the story can't be true. But the lesson it teaches is true. People sometimes say unkind words that really hurt—hurt quite as much as the sting of a reptile does; and, on the other hand, you have, I am sure, often heard kind and loving words that have made you as happy as you would be if a most beautiful present had been given to you—pearls or diamonds, or other things just as precious. Just think about it. Think of Willie, in my first story, alone and very dull and wretched, and of Mimi

cheering him up with just a word or, perhaps, only a look. Don't you think that word or that look was more precious to him than any present, however fine ? And then think of your parents. Would they not rather have a word of love or of willing obedience from you than all the presents you can give them ? So you see that the fairy story is true, because the lesson it teaches is true, as is the case with many fairy stories and what are sometimes called legends. Every time an unkind person speaks, his words hurt someone ; it is as though he had dealt that someone a hard blow. And, on the other hand, the words of a kind man, or woman, or child, are stored up in the hearts of those who hear them like gold and silver in a treasure-house. If you always remember this, I don't believe you will ever let an unkind word pass your lips. You will try to make everyone you know happier by speaking kindly and gently. You know the old, lovely prayer that we Jews say every day ? It goes like this : " O my God, keep my tongue from evil." Accustom yourselves to say that prayer and to feel it. And, when you say it, remember to include in the evil from which you ask God to guard your tongue all harsh and unloving words. For, as the Wise Man tells us in the Bible, " Life and death are in the power of the tongue"—the happiness of other people, which is truly their life, and the misery of other people, which is truly their death. But God helps those who help themselves. If we would have Him guard our tongue from evil, we must try to guard it ourselves. He has placed our tongue between two sets of double doors—I mean, of course, our teeth and our lips. Why ? Is it not because He would have us keep it safe—safe from doing harm, safe so that we may use it only for good ?

## GOOD MANNERS

I AM going to talk to you this morning about politeness, about good manners. Now, I daresay some of you will ask, "Whatever are you going to talk about that for? Politeness is nothing to do with religion." But those of you who think so are very much mistaken. Politeness *has* to do with religion. The Bible tells us a great deal about it, and we can easily see why it does. It is the good man and the good woman who have the best manners, because real politeness comes from kindness of heart. Just think about it a little. Kind-hearted people must necessarily have regard for the feelings of others, and this is the very essence of politeness; and kindness is the essence of religion. The Bible tells us that we must rise up before the hoary (that is, the grey) head, and honour the face of the old man—in other words, that we must show respect to age. Now, I remember a lady, who was very old, going one day to a school to give a religious lesson to the children, and unfortunately she had a smudge on her face. That might happen to any of us in the sooty air of London or any other big town. The children, instead of listening to the lesson, just nudged each other, and giggled, as you know children do sometimes; and the lady, who had come a very long way to teach them, felt most uncomfortable, and wondered what she could have said or done to make them behave in that way. Fortunately, I happened to look at her, and saw the smudge on her face, and told her of it. She

wiped it off, and then the lesson went on quite well. But would it not have been much kinder, much more polite, if one of the children, instead of laughing, and making their kind friend so uncomfortable, had followed the example of a little child that I read about in a book the other day ? A teacher in a big school came one morning with her linen collar all on one side. She did look so funny ! But, just as she was going to begin her lesson, one small boy went up to her, and putting his arm round her neck, whispered, " Teacher, dear, would you mind putting your collar right ? " Now, by doing so, he showed real consideration and love for his teacher ; he showed courage too, because, though he was only a tiny child, he went up to the teacher before the whole class. He had the courage to do it because he respected and loved her. It often requires courage to do the right thing, and bad manners are sometimes the result of shyness, which is, of course, want of courage.

Some of you may have heard the story of three school-boys who were in a room where there happened to be no chairs. Presently a lady came in. Each boy behaved differently. One of them simply fidgeted about ; he had an *idea* of fetching a chair for the lady, but didn't. The second boy went and fetched a chair ; the third boy sat down on it ! The first boy had right feeling, but not strong will enough to do the right thing ; the second boy felt rightly and acted rightly ; the third boy could do neither—he was just selfish and rude. As I said before, politeness is kindness of heart. We often read of the chivalry of men in olden times ; but, personally, I don't think much of it. We usually read of its being shown to lovely young maidens. Well, there doesn't seem to be much merit in that. True chivalry is that which is exercised towards all human beings without distinction—to the old as well as to the young, to the ugly as well as to the beautiful. One of the best acts of chivalry I know

of was done by one who is now dead, but whom some of you may have heard of. It was done by Mr. Frederic Mocatta, who, besides being wealthy, was one of the kindest men that ever lived. One hot summer's day, as he was walking along the street, he saw an old woman staggering under a very heavy bundle. He went up, and begged her to let him carry it for her ; and, in spite of the heat, and the inconvenience, and the somewhat strange look of it, he carried that bundle through a crowded thoroughfare as far as the old woman had to go. I should never have heard of this had it not been that someone saw the whole thing by chance and told me about it. I am glad I did hear of it, for it is an example that we might all try to imitate—in spirit, at any rate. I say “in spirit” because, although we may not be called upon just to carry an old woman's bundle, we are asked, every day we live, to show some kindness to our fellow-creatures, and to care for their feelings more than our own. By gentle acts and gentle words we can make other people happy, and to do this is truly to perform a religious duty. Children, you have only to remember the command, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”—you will find it in the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus—and then you cannot help being thoughtful and considerate to everyone you meet. For real politeness is love.

## CONTENTMENT

**T**HIS talk is about Contentment. I want you all to understand that, no matter how much we have, we shall never be happy if we are always wanting something more. This wanting something more is a mistake which the old make as well as the young. They see others possessing something which they haven't got themselves, and so they are dissatisfied, and think that they would be perfectly happy if they could just have that one thing. The grown-ups want, perhaps, a finer house, or a richer set of furs, or a motor-car; the younger ones want a new toy, or pretty books, or chocolates. Others have these delightful things; why should not we? But instead of thinking of the people who have more things, or what seem to be better things, than we have, how much more sensible it would be to think about those who have far less and are worse off. We can never have everything; so why not make up our minds to be satisfied with the things we have? And is it not true that, as we all come to find by experience, if, by some chance, we do get something we have been longing for, it does not, in the long run, make us really any happier? Sometimes it even makes us worse off. We think, perhaps, that we should be happier if we had a little more money, but we soon find out our mistake. The more we get the more we want. And money itself is not happiness.

Let me tell you a story about this. There was once a king called Midas. He was very avaricious—that is to say, he wanted to be very rich ; and so he prayed that he might have much gold and yet more gold. His prayer was answered ; everything he touched should turn to gold. He was hugely delighted. It seemed so lovely that as soon as he put his hand on a table or a chair they should change into gold. But the poor king didn't find it so beautiful when he was hungry and sat down to dinner. The soup, and the meat, and the vegetables turned to gold as soon as he touched them, and he almost died of starvation. With plenty of gold in his possession he was as poor as the poorest beggar. And now about somebody else who lived quite recently, and not, as Midas did, in olden times. There was an American gentleman who was said to be the richest man in the world. He worked, and worked, with the one idea of getting as much money as possible, trying, as king Midas did, to turn everything into gold. But at last, just like Midas, he was nearly starved to death, for his digestion got so bad, through his overworking himself in order to get rich, that he could eat nothing but just a little milk-food. It was said that he envied the poorest man who had a good digestion even though he hadn't enough to eat. No, children, money doesn't make us happy, nor do carriages, nor do fine houses, nor silks and furs. Nothing makes us happy except being content with what we have.

Just let me tell you another story, one also about a king. This king must be nameless, because I don't know what his name was. Well, for some reason or another he was very miserable ; and, calling his wise men to him one day, he asked them to tell him what he could do in order to be happy. Their advice was very strange. They advised him to try and find the happiest man in his kingdom, and then, having found him, to

wear his shirt. He sought all through his dominions, and at last he found the happiest man, but he was so poor that he hadn't got a shirt ; so he couldn't lend it to the king. The story, of course, teaches us that the very poorest man, too poor to have enough clothes to cover him, may be the happiest. It does not mean, of course, that people are necessarily happy because they are poor. There are many poor people who are unhappy simply because they have not found out the secret of happiness. They are just as foolish and unfortunate as the unhappy rich. It is neither riches nor poverty that makes us happy ; but, as I have said, just a contented spirit, the feeling that we have enough, the feeling of being satisfied with the good things we have and of gratitude for them. I am afraid that there are very few persons who are really contented. Most of us want something else. It is very silly and very wrong. It is silly because mere *things* never satisfy ; only thoughts and feelings do. If we rely for our happiness upon mere things, however delightful and desirable they seem, then we are sure to be disappointed ; for they never come up to our expectations, and our longing and our misery begin all over again. If we would be happy, we must find the springs of happiness in our own hearts, in taking the things we already have and making the best of them. To do otherwise is wrong as well as silly. It is to show ourselves ungrateful to God, to undervalue His gifts to us, to charge Him with being unkind and unjust. Let me end with just one story more. A certain gentleman once had a notice-board put up on a part of his land, on which was written, "I will give this field to anyone who is really contented." Hundreds of people applied for it. As each applicant came, the gentleman asked him, "Are you contented ?" "Yes, I am," was the answer. "Well, if you are contented," replied the gentleman, "why do you want my field ?" And they

all had to go away unsuccessful and ashamed. No one got the field because no one was contented. The prizes of life are for the satisfied, for those who, wanting nothing, however little they have, possess all things.

## ABOUT INFLUENCE

**M**Y subject this morning is Influence. Have you ever thought, I wonder, what a power, or force, every one of you can be for good or evil? You have not got to *preach* goodness to others; you have just got to be good yourselves, and then you will influence them—that is to say, you will help them to be good too. Perhaps you know those wonderful words in the nineteenth Psalm, which speak of the sky, and of the sun that goes his daily round in it. Both sky and sun, it says, declare the glory and greatness of God. But how? Only by *doing*, not by *talking*. The clouds in the sky, and the sun above them, go their way, and do their work—that is all; they *say* nothing, the Psalmist reminds us, and yet, as he also reminds us, “their teaching goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” All people, that is to say, hear their message about God, and take it to heart. And we in our turn can be—we are—silent messengers, just like the sun and the sky. Without saying a word, and merely by living our lives, we influence, we teach others. We influence them by our example. But there is bad example as well as good. What we are, we help others to be. By doing good ourselves we help our brothers and sisters, and friends and companions, to be good too; if we do wrong, we put it into their minds, or strengthen their intention, to do wrong also. And kindness means happiness; wrong-doing means unhappiness. So, you see, the happiness, as well as the goodness

of others—some of them very near and dear to us—is largely in our hands. This is what I mean by influence.

If we think about this seriously, we shall understand what a great responsibility we all have. Responsibility is a big word, with ever so many syllables, but it stands for something which is itself very big indeed. Ought it not to make us more careful than ever to be good when we think that, just by our own conduct, we are helping to make other people either good and happy, or bad and unhappy? When I was a child, as young as some of you, I used to think it very strange that, in the story-books, good children were always happy and bad children miserable. I am afraid that I thought it wasn't quite true, but only just a made-up story to frighten or coax children to be good. Now I know that the stories were really true. Of course, being good wouldn't save Harry or Kitty from falling down and being hurt, or from being ill. It wouldn't give them a fine day when they wanted to go out. But what it would do would be to make them feel happy and contented, patient and good-tempered, in spite of illness in the one case and in spite of being disappointed in the other. I say this to explain to you why I put together the words "good" and "happy," "bad" and "miserable." Now there are some people who are very sensitive, which means that they feel and know things very easily; they say that they can feel or know whether anyone they are near is good or not, even though that person may not say a single syllable. They do so—to use a grand word—instinctively. They feel the "influence" of that person by simply being in his company. If this be so, then how greatly may we be influenced by others when they *do* speak and act; and on the other hand, how greatly others may influence us!

I read the other day that dolls are very much prized in Japan, even by grown-ups. An Englishman,

who was once travelling in that country, was lucky enough to be present at what was called a Dolls' Festival. A large number of dolls of all sizes had been got together and the greatest possible attention was shown them. Food was placed before them, and beds got ready in case they should be tired; and the Englishman was seriously told that the dolls would cry if they did not get everything they wanted, and that on the other hand, if they were properly and lovingly cared for they would really and truly come to life. "But," said the gentleman to the little Japanese girl who was telling him all about it, "how can a doll be alive?" "Why," she replied, "if you love it enough, it must live; love can do everything." Well, *we* don't believe, as the little Japanese girl did, that we can make dolls come to life even by love; but we do, or ought to, believe that love can do a very great deal to make *people* live. For think: if we see a person who is very sad and unhappy, and we say, "All the life seems to have gone out of him," what do we do? Don't we cheer him up for love's sake? And does not our love seem to give him new life? Love can do wonders; its power, its influence, is enormous. And influence does not stop when life stops. We are all being taught, and helped, and inspired by the men and women who did great deeds years ago. Moses is dead, but his influence lives. It will continue through the centuries, and countless lives will be nobler because he lived just one life. Children, let us all try so that our living and striving may be a good influence over other people, and help to make them happier, and just a little better. If this seems rather a grand programme for children, you have only to remember what the little Japanese girl said: "Love can do everything."

## THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

**T**HIS is about Example, both good and bad. Example is a great force, for it can achieve great results. There is nothing so catching; even measles or whooping-cough cannot compete with it in this respect. And it is far less easily managed than measles; people take less pains to guard against it. If a boy or girl has some "catching" illness they are not allowed to see other children, but must remain shut up in one room until the doctor says it is safe to go about. But little or no trouble is taken to ward off the mischief of bad example. The young person who has a bad influence over his schoolfellows is allowed to go amongst them at his own sweet will, and does them far more harm than he would if he had given them measles. You see, we can nurse a child who has measles, and get him well again, but we cannot cure a child who is led by evil example to do wrong. He has to cure himself. Of course, everyone—young people as well as grown-up people—can be strong enough to resist bad example; life, happily, isn't a game of "Follow-my-leader." But unfortunately, we don't all put forth, and use, our strength. We see others doing wrong, and we think, perhaps, it is rather grand to do the same, and so we do wrong too. And the worst part of it is that, once begun, we get into the habit of doing it, and its effect may spoil our whole character, our whole life. So let us all understand the great responsibility that is laid upon us. Our bad example may ruin those we come into

contact with. But, happily, the opposite is also true. Our good example may help to make any number of people better and worthier. Some of you may have read the book called "Tom Brown's School-days." If so, you will remember that part of it where Tom goes to school, and on the first night kneels down in the large dormitory and says his prayers before going to bed, as he has always been accustomed to do at home. The other boys laugh and jeer. But Tom goes on with his prayers, although he hates to be laughed at, as you all would. He goes on because he has been taught that to pray is right, and he is brave enough to do what is right. And what happens? Before the term is over every boy in that dormitory follows his example, and prays regularly every night.

Some wonderful stories are told of the powerful effects of just one person's example—how a battle has been won by a soldier bravely scaling a wall in the very teeth of the enemy's guns when his comrades were turning back, and how his courage rallied them and the fight was won. And again, how one coward has lost a battle, or one man's hesitation and fear has infected a whole army and made them cowards too. And it isn't only grown-up people who possess this power, good or evil as it may be. I read the following story in a newspaper some little time ago. Somewhere in the country there was an entertainment given in the theatre for the school-children. The theatre was crowded. The performance began; but all of a sudden the scenery caught fire, and some of the children began to scream, and rushed to the doors. A man came on to the stage, and, telling the children there was no danger, begged them to remain in their places. But they were too frightened to listen. Then one of them called out in a little tiny voice, for he was very young, "You had better sit still; mother always tells me to." And that little

voice was heard throughout the building, and because it was so little, because it was the voice of one of themselves, the children listened to it, and did keep still, and the fire was soon put out. That small child's brave obedience to duty in the hour of danger saved numbers of little ones from being crushed to death in a general rush for the doors. His calmness made the others calm, and a dreadful calamity was prevented. So you see how big is the power of example. Do think of this, and resolve that you will, each of you, try to make others good by being good yourselves. God has said to all of us, as He said to Abraham in olden times, "Be thou a blessing"; and how can we bless our fellow creatures more than by showing them, in the beauty of our own lives, how they may nobly live their own?

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## PASSOVER

**T**HIS is one of our great festivals; in many respects the greatest of all. This Festival of Passover is to remind us of such a very important event in our history that we Jews can hardly think too much about it. We call this event the Departure from Egypt; but it means much more than that. It means the deliverance from slavery, the rescue from destruction, of all the Israelites then living; if they had been destroyed, none of us would be here now. Just think of London, for instance, without a single Jew or Jewess in it. And that would have been the case all over the world if God had not rescued those other Jews, hundreds and hundreds of years ago. We will go back just for a moment to the beginning of our race. You remember there was a great and good man named Abraham, and God promised him that he should become a great nation, and that his descendants should never die out from among the other nations. It must have seemed very strange to Abraham that he—just one man—should be the starting-point of a whole people. But you all know how it is. I expect many of you have a grandfather, and you know that he is the head of the family, and that he has sons and daughters, and that they have sons and daughters, so that when you all meet together there are quite a lot of you. And so it was with Abraham and his children till we come to his descendants who settled in Egypt. Not a nation yet, or anything like it, but a good big family. And you

know how more and more children were born, until in course of time God's promise to Abraham seemed in course of fulfilment. But that was only half the promise ; the other half was that this nation should never die out. You know that plenty of the old nations *did* die out and were forgotten. " Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, where are they ? " But we are still here because God made this promise to Abraham, who was the very first father of all of us Jews. You all know how often we have been in danger of destruction, and that every time God has brought us safely out of peril. Perhaps this time in Egypt was the greatest danger of all. We were still such a *little* nation, it would have been so easy to have got rid of us all.

You know the story ; we won't go through it now. You know how our people were made bondmen in Egypt, and driven to work by cruel task-masters. They were treated like slaves, but I do not believe that, knowing and loving and trusting our great Father, they could ever have felt quite like slaves. Their lives were terribly hard, but still—wonderful to say—they didn't die as wicked Pharaoh hoped they would. No ; the little nation kept on growing. And at last, as you know, the deliverer came—Moses. And this is another thing to notice in our history. Our great men are not always kings or princes, but ever so often men in a lowly state of life. It's rather splendid—isn't it ?—to feel that we needn't be rich or well born in order to be *great*. Moses' mother, as you know, was quite an ordinary woman ; but you will all agree that he was a truly great man. With God's help he led his brethren out of Egypt, and, instead of being miserable slaves, they became free men. I wonder if you realise at all what it means to be free ? In Egypt they had been compelled to worship their God in secret ; they had to hide their babies when they were born to save

them from being put to death ; they had to work for their masters without any reward ; they had to cringe before their rulers—never in all the long day might they follow their own wishes. At Passover we remember this, and we also remember their wonderful deliverance. We who live so happily, free to worship God in the way we know to be right, free to do what we wish, go where we like, do the work we want to do, ought to find it very easy to show our gratitude to God. And when we keep the Feast of Passover we declare to the world the right of all men to be free. We show our hatred of oppression and slavery, our remembrance of the time when our people grew weak under it and suffered so much from it ; and we give heartfelt thanks to our God who saved us—saved us from slavery, from misery, from death. God's promise to Abraham in the years long gone by was fulfilled. In all our history we were never in so much danger of utter destruction ; in all our history we never had such a wonderful deliverance.

This is the first and greatest lesson Passover teaches us—gratitude for our freedom. Another lesson is the beauty of family union. On the Seder night—the first night of the festival—families meet together to celebrate the Holy Day. As you all know, everyone tries to be home on that night. Grown-up sons and daughters come from far and near ; little children are specially allowed to be present ; and there are many guests, some of them poor strangers whom our beautiful Law tells us to invite, or travellers obliged to be absent from their own loved ones. We all keep Passover together, happily, joyously, thankfully—proud of our religion, glorying in our God.

## KIPPUR

**T**HE ten days of which this is the last have been given to us as a time for thought and reflection. It is a most important part of our religion that we have certain days put aside to use in turning our thoughts to God. Of these the most important is with us now—Kippur, the day of Atone-ment—and the past nine days have been, I hope, a preparation for this one. They have been very solemn days, not meant to make us afraid, only to make us think. Days for remembering. None of you can have serious sins to think about, but all of you must remember many times when you have done wrong. And it is only too easy to go on doing a little wrong thing over and over again until in time it becomes a big thing. These faults of ours might become real big sins, even crimes, if we did not check them. So God has given us these days to look into our hearts, and honestly tell ourselves in what way we have erred. There is no one too young to know where he is weak. There is a saying that the strength of a chain is only the strength of its weakest link. The chain may be of the very strongest, but if there is one flaw in it, it will snap just at that place. Such a chain may be used to fasten a ship to a pier. A storm comes; the ship strains at the chain; snap goes that one faulty link, and the chain is a chain no longer. And even a little child on this day should ask himself, “Where am *I* weak?” And if he answers truthfully he may have to say, “I am lazy.”

There is *his* weak link, and yet in all other respects he may be a strong, well-made chain. Well, he has the power now, while he is young, of overcoming that fault. But if he does not do so it will go on getting worse and worse. One day, when he is a man, he may see his chance to do some great deed; but it needs taking trouble, for he has not overcome his fault which was once such a little one; and *now* it may possibly ruin his whole life. So we must use this Day of Atonement as God means it to be used; we must call to mind the way we have spent the past year and pass judgment on ourselves. Year by year you are expected to improve, not only in knowledge but in character. Every year, as you grow older, you are expected to have fewer faults and more virtues, and each Day of Atonement, as it comes, you must satisfy yourselves that this improvement is taking place. But if this should not be so, what then? If, when you examine yourselves and find there is no improvement, that your duties have been neglected, your bad passions have been encouraged, your days wasted—what then? Are you, therefore, to despair, to go on in the same way, letting your faults tighten their grip on you? No! a thousand times, no! God has given you this holy day, this great Day of Atonement, to set you free from your faults. “For on this day shall atonement be made to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.”

What a wonderful day this is! We are to spend it in communion with God, to put aside all thoughts of our usual pursuits, our usual work and pleasures, and to acknowledge our sins to Him, and pray for His forgiveness and His help. Do not think there is any magic in the affliction of the body we are called upon to bear. We do not make atonement by fasting, but by prayer and repentance, and a strong resolve to do better. My own idea about fasting is that it is good for us—

not because it pleases God for us to be hungry, but because it is good that we should realise for one day what poor creatures we really are without the daily blessings of food and drink He gives us, and how absolutely helpless we should all be without His bounties. It is a great privilege, if we use this day rightly, to feel that we have cast off the burden of our faults, and may begin again a new life with a clean soul and a joyful heart. Each of us must make private confession of his own special sins direct to God. Confession is the first step towards doing better, and must be accompanied by a firm resolve to have no more to do with our bad habits. You will have to work hard yourselves. You will have to remember and keep on remembering "Life is our school, and God our great schoolmaster, and the prize that He offers is happiness." And happiness comes when we are rightly satisfied with ourselves, when we have struggled for victory over our lower nature and won it. There is a great gift God has given us, the gift of *will*. It is this gift that puts us above the brute creation; we are free to choose between right and wrong, between good and evil. "I am; I ought; I can; I will."

There, isn't that a thought for you? You are at present cared for and watched over; but one day—and it will come soon—you will go out into the world and act on your own responsibility, with no one to tell you what to do or how to do it. You must sometimes think of that coming time, and prepare for it. There is no one here too young to think sometimes what sort of a man or woman he or she will be. I say *will be*; for in a great measure our moral life is in our own hands. "*I am.*" *What* are you? You each one of you know. You each one of you know where you fail and where you excel. It is good that you should sometimes think of it. To-day you must think of it.

*"I ought."* You know what you ought to be. You know you ought to be truthful, scrupulously honourable—oh, it's a long word, but you know what it means—you ought to be brave, and gentle, and strong of will; these are just a few of the things you ought to be. *"I can."* Of course you can. It is in your power to be what you choose to be. To-day you ask God to help you. *"I will."* This is where the test comes in. It's no good just to say *"I will"*; you must mean it in the heart and soul of you. A will-less creature is the most pitiful and contemptible on this earth, a man or woman, a boy or girl, bent this way or that by anyone or anything. But to-day with God's help we shall will to be strong in right-doing. We shall earnestly and firmly say, *"Such and such are my faults; I will get rid of them."* We are stronger, we are greater for every fault conquered, and we need to be strong and great. Everyone has his sorrows, and temptations, and difficulties. We are not to sit down and submit to them; we are to overcome them. Evil is in the world for man to conquer; the passions are strong within us, but the will is stronger. We have to fight these giants boldly and manfully, for to conquer them is the aim and end of this great battle of life. We are all God's children—all just little children in His sight—and we all want to make our beautiful world more beautiful still, by leading beautiful lives, thinking beautiful thoughts, and doing beautiful deeds. To-day we will resolve firmly, once for all, to have done with what is wrong and ugly, and with God's help to become worthy of His goodness and of His love.

## AFTER KIPPUR

**W**E have just passed through a very solemn time, from the Jewish point of view the most solemn time of the year, and I think we have all realised in more or less degree what a holy time it was. First we had New Year's Day to remind us that Kippur is at hand, when, if we truly repent of our sins, we shall be forgiven. I am not going to talk about these holy days now. We have passed through them so recently that you hardly need to be reminded of them ; but I want to ask you : Do you remember the good resolves you made, and are you carrying them out ? When the time comes again next year, will you be able to say, " Last Kippur I promised God and myself I would fight against my bad habits, and, with God's help, I have been able to make myself a little better " ? Because now is the time—to-day and every day. I don't suppose for a moment any of you are bad children. I am quite sure you are not ; but we all sometimes do what is wrong, and we all need to try hard to do what is right. On New Year's Day, and on Kippur, you thought very carefully over your chief faults, and you resolved to overcome them. But—*are you doing it* ? The chance to do it comes every day ; and a day lost, an opportunity neglected, is a day lost, an opportunity gone—for ever. There was a boy once—I expect you know more about him than I do, who lost his opportunity to do what was right, and it never came back again. His name was Peter Pan. When he was quite tiny he

heard his mother and father talking about what he should do when he became a man. But Peter didn't want to grow up. He never thought how splendid it was to be a strong man, and do a man's grand work in the world; he just wanted to be a little boy and play for ever. So he flew out of the window, and went to live in the Never-Never Land, with the other lost boys and the fairies. And he did nothing all day but play games and do just as he liked. But after some time he got tired of it, and he thought it would be nice to go back to his mother, and be loved and petted, and even do some lessons and be a real boy once more. So he went back; and the window was open a little way, and he peeped in. And there was his mother, sitting by the fire, and she was crying. She wanted Peter back so badly. And his cot was there waiting for him, with the clothes turned down, and his sleeping-suit, and slippers, and dressing-gown—all the things done for him that all the mothers do for all the boys and girls. And Peter was just going to open the window, and slip in and run to his mother, when he thought, "Whenever I come here she will always be waiting for me; I won't go in to-day, but go back and play a little longer." So though he knew his mother wouldn't cry any more if he went in and kissed her, he flew away to enjoy himself. But now listen what happened. After a time he said, "I really will go back this time, and stay always with my mother." And he went back again to the window, but it was shut tight; and when he looked in his mother was laughing and cuddling up a new boy she had. And Peter went on looking in, and cried, and cried, but she never heard him. He had been away so long that she thought he would never come home any more. So when Peter found he couldn't get in, and his place was filled up, he had to go back again and be a little boy for ever and ever. And I can't tell you

how he wanted his mother. Now, I do think this is such a sad little tale. It was so dreadful of him not to mind when his mother was crying, and only to think of what he liked best. I am sure that you all agree with me. I believe God pointed out to him what he ought to do while he was looking in at that window, and that he hardened his heart and wouldn't listen.

Children, would you have listened? *Do you listen?* It's a very good plan, when you feel inclined to do something you know is naughty, to say, "Look here, Jack or Ethel"—or whatever your name is—"I'm not going to let you do it, do you hear?" Don't think, "I'll do it this once, but I won't next time." Remember Peter. Perhaps there won't be a chance next time. I won't say, "Don't make your mothers cry," because we all know that mothers don't cry unless it is for a very big thing indeed. But don't make them sorry. They are always sorry when their boys and girls do wrong; but when they see the same wrong thing being done over and over again without the least attempt to break away from it, they are very sorry indeed. Because they know—mothers can see so plainly—that a bad habit once formed is its own punishment and a punishment that will very likely last through life. Can you understand that, I wonder? You see—don't you?—that if a child is always stooping he or she can't grow up into a beautiful, straight, strong young person, but that the ugly habit will have made him or her ugly too. Well, it's just the same way with faults. If you don't get the better of them they will get the better of you, and make you ugly inside. Just as, if you persist in growing up round-shouldered, no one will admire you, so if you persist in growing up deceitful, for instance, no one will respect you. And mothers know all about this quite well; so, you see, when you make them sorry, because you are not being good, they are thinking how

it will be with you when you grow up; if you don't conquer your bad habits now. Again, then, I ask you, "Are you remembering your good resolves? And are you carrying them out?"

## CHANUCAH

**T**HIS is a story about heroes. We Jews may well be proud when we think over our history and remember how many heroic deeds figure in it. I do not think that we need give pride of place to any other people. We read of Christian martyrs who suffered death rather than deny their religion, and we are ready to give all honour to them. But we too had our martyrs, and who knows that it may not have been their history that inspired those others so many years later? When we read, and are proud to read, of men acting in noble ways because their fathers had done so before them, and because they would be ashamed not to keep up such splendid traditions, let us remember that *we* also have fine traditions and a noble history, that we have had heroes in the past as glorious as any others, and that we must be very particular to live our lives in such a way that they might be proud to think we were descended from them.

Before speaking about Chanukah, the Feast that celebrates heroic deeds, I should like to tell you a tale I heard about a hero. I don't think he was a Jewish hero, but you will be interested all the same. An officer-boy came back from France during the great war, and he had been shot in the head and was blind. He came back home, and was very brave and tried hard to be cheerful, and his mother—though she was very brave too (she had to be, as she had six sons

fighting)—could hardly bear her trouble. She could not bear to think that he would never see the garden again. They had a beautiful garden, and they had always been very proud of it. And she clenched her hands and said, "He shan't be blind." And she found out the best doctor, and had him down to see the wounded man. And you can imagine the mother's joy, and how she called God to bless him, when he told her that he could restore one eye so that it would see perfectly. And she said that they both had soldier sons, and could be glad to help each other. But the poor doctor had to reply that he had heard that morning that his boy had been killed. In spite of all his sorrow he had come to help where he could. *He* was a hero, wasn't he? And yet he was an old man—we don't somehow think of old men as heroes, but our feast of Chanukah celebrates such another. At this festival I always think chiefly of Mattathias, for it was this old priest who, with his sons, took upon himself the apparently impossible task of fighting the vast armies of the Syrians. The Syrians had invaded Palestine, and were killing thousands of Jews who refused to become converts to their idolatrous religion. They had got the upper hand, and made use of their power to crush and terrify their victims. The thing they did that almost maddened the Jews was to defile their Temple and insult their religion. They went into God's holy house, and made it horrible with idol-worship. They thought that if they were cruel enough our people would be willing to give up their beliefs, and become idolaters as they were. It all seemed very hopeless, and it looked as if the Jews must perish for ever. Those who were left alive fled, taking refuge in mountain caverns. We all know something of what happens when small countries are over-run by enemy hordes; so we can imagine the unhappy plight of the hunted Jews. But Mattathias did not lose heart in those dark times.

This old man dared to pull down the idolatrous altars, rallied a few villagers round him, and made a successful stand against the foe. And you all know that, God helping them, they did at last drive out the Syrians, and restore His pure worship in the Temple. Just the same lesson, you see, as Purim, and Passover, and other Feasts teach us—the working of God's hand in human history and human destiny.

I haven't told you in full detail the story of which this Festival reminds us; but if you don't know it I hope that you will read it for yourselves. Mattathias did not live to see victory, but his sons, chief among whom was Judas Maccabeus, finished the great task he had begun. You may well imagine that the first thing they did was to purify their beloved Temple, and to make it once more a fit place for the worship of God. Judas and his brothers were called the Maccabees, and it is thought that this name was derived from the first letters of the Hebrew words that mean "Who is like unto thee among the mighty, O Lord?" Anyway, these were the inspiring words that were on the banner of Judas. There are, of course, many lessons for us in all these events, many things specially to be remembered at Chanukah. One is Justice. Sooner or later punishment comes from God to evil-doers. One lesson I should particularly like to put before you is, that no danger of any kind can excuse a Jew from the practice of his religion. These Jews of olden time—heroes all of them—went in fear of their lives, for to dare to show that they were Jews meant death; but they defied their enemies and obeyed their God. In these days we have no danger to fear if we declare ourselves Jews, if we go to synagogue regularly and keep our Law, and yet I very much fear that if Judas Maccabeus and his brothers came to life now they would wonder at us and rather despise us. They

delivered their people from oppression, they restored to all its old strength our glorious religion ; what we have to do is to obey the Law as they obeyed it, and to prove to everyone, by the worthiness of our lives, what a right and good Law it is.

## PURIM

**A**LL little girls must be interested in the story of Esther, as little boys are in that of David. And her story is very much mixed up with the story of Purim. You remember how Ahasuerus, king of Persia, wanted a wife, and he didn't care what sort of one he found as long as she was pretty enough to please him. You will all agree that this is a very queer way to choose a wife, but sometimes beauty of face reflects beauty of soul. You know what I mean? However pretty a little girl may be, if she is in the habit of being cross and disagreeable she will look disagreeable, which won't be pretty at all. But if she is a sweet, happy, good-natured sort of child, she will look gay and happy, so that it will be a great pleasure to everyone to see her, and she will make people think of sunshine and all sorts of nice things. Well, by great good fortune King Ahasuerus chanced on a wife of this kind. She was very pretty, and very sweet, and very good. She was Esther the Jewess. Again I want you to notice that it was a girl in quite a humble way of life who was chosen by God to save her people. David, a shepherd boy, Joseph, a prisoner, acting as a servant in the prison, Moses, son of an ordinary Hebrew woman, Esther, an orphan—again and again we see that one need not be rich or grand to be able to do grand deeds. Esther lived as queen in a palace, and through very exciting times, but she never forgot the good training her cousin, Mordecai, who brought her up, had given her, and always

acted in the way she knew to be right. For instance, when Mordecai discovered a plot against the king's life he told Esther about it. Now she might very easily have taken all the credit herself of saving the king's life; but she was honest and straightforward, and was careful to let her husband know that it was Mordecai who found it all out. You can't help noticing all through this history of hers how she refused to take the easy path, and was afraid of no risk to herself if only she could serve her people. We find this rich, beautiful, beloved wife of a powerful king saying, "How can I endure to see the evil that shall come to my people?" Why, she might have chosen to forget that she belonged to such a despised race, and been only too glad to hide the fact that she was a Jewess, especially when it seemed that she would have to die with the rest. But she was afraid of nothing save only of being unworthy.

This is another of the occasions when our people were in deadly peril, and I would like you to notice in what a mean and shameful way their enemy went to work against them. The cry did not go forth, "Kill all the Jews and steal their property," though this was the intention of their enemy. Haman wished to be revenged on Mordecai, and we read he "thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone"; so he planned a terrible thing, and was very crafty and clever in the way he set about it. He was a favourite of the king's, who was likely to grant him any request. And the request he made was that Mordecai and all his people should be slain; and in order that the king should agree, he bribed him with a very large sum of money, which of course he meant to take by force from his victims. And so that there might be some sort of excuse for this crime, he told lies about the poor Jews, and said they were a people who refused to obey the king's laws. It does not sound much of a reason why a whole people—men,

women, and children—should be murdered, especially since it only rested on the word of one man ; but I'm afraid that in those days, as in many, many times later, the people of the lands where our ancestors had settled were only too willing to fall on them and to take their lives and goods on any pretence whatever. You all know the brave way in which Esther saved her kindred. She was only a young girl, and could not have had the wisdom to act as she did without guidance and help ; and, had not God willed it, that wonderful chain of events could never have occurred one after the other, until at last the Jews, doomed all to die, and in the depths of despair, were raised to safety and triumph.

We celebrate Purim with joy and gladness, and it is an old custom of ours to exchange gifts in honour of it. There is one point I think that shines out splendidly. Mordecai the Jew and Esther the Jewess—Jews were not much esteemed in those days—became, with God's help, the saviours of their people, and Mordecai's one anxiety was to do honour to God by placing on record an account of their wonderful escape. This we may read in the book of Esther. We read that when he was raised to high rank, though he was "next to the king," he yet remained steadfast to his faith and race, "great among the Jews" and "seeking the welfare of his people." In this book of Esther the name of God is not once mentioned ; but, through it all—and this is the lesson we specially remember at Purim—there is the recollection of God's hand, of His guiding power in all human affairs. And we remember that Mordecai and Esther brought honour to their people, and made the name of Jew respected where it had been despised. Some of you boys may, with God's help, become great men too ; but remember that, first of all, and chief of all, you are Jews, and that it behoves 'you 'all, each one of you—whether you are a great man, or just a good, honest,

straightforward citizen, without being particularly distinguished—so to act as to show that the greatest pride you have is in your religion, and that you mean to make the name of Jew esteemed and honoured wherever your life may lead you.

## PRAYER

**L**ET us consider a little the subject of prayer. We all think we know what is meant by prayer ; but few of us realise what it means to pray. When we repeated those beautiful, simple prayers this morning did the meaning of them penetrate into our hearts and minds ? Did we understand—did we try to understand—what we were saying, and Whom we were addressing ? I am afraid not. I suppose we have a vague idea that we are pleasing God by attending these services, or any services ; but if we think for one moment, we shall see at once that it is not the mere fact of coming here, and listening to prayers or saying them ourselves, that is pleasant in His sight. Can any of us honestly say that our whole attention was on what we said and heard ? Can we say that we meant the little prayers with all our hearts, and that, while we were praying, we were thinking so hard, and meaning what we said so earnestly, that for the time we had quite forgotten everything else—the place we were in, the rest of the worshippers, and all the little matters that make up our daily lives ? Yet this is what we ought to do : we should think only that we are here in God's House, on His chosen day, to praise Him for His past mercies, to pray to Him to continue them. Why, if we wished to thank our parents for being good to us, we should give them our whole attention ; and if we wished to ask them for something, we should ask respectfully and think of what we were saying. You know quite well that could

such a wonderful thing happen that you were in the presence of the king of England, and were allowed to speak to him, you couldn't think of anything else at all ; and you know—of course, you know—that God whom you are addressing is the King of kings. Yet how few of us pay Him respect when we approach His presence ! I don't in the very least mean children only ; I fear most of us have the same fault. But it is a great sin—as great a sin, I think, as we can commit. It is far better to say no prayers at all, or not to come here at all, if we are unable to behave with reverence.

Do you remember the words with which our service opens ? “Almighty God, be with us, we beseech Thee, in our worship this day. Help us so that our prayers may come not only from our lips but from our hearts. While we pray may we remember that we are standing in Thy presence, O Father in Heaven and King of kings, so shall we speak to Thee in all love and reverence.” We know that it is sometimes difficult to fix our attention, to remember where we are, and what we are doing ; therefore we begin by asking God to *help* us to pray to Him. And if you have really said these words meaning them with all your hearts, then I am quite sure that the help has come, that you have praised Him and thanked Him in the right way, and that you have gone home helped and strengthened for your life during the following week. Have you meant these words ? Let each of you ask yourselves the question. Did you mean it when you said, “Help us so that our prayers may come not only from our lips but from our hearts” ? This spirit of reverence for which we pray can become a part of ourselves—be one of our most precious possessions. Believe this ; even if you don't understand, believe it. I have told you before to get into the habit of saying or thinking “God help me” if you are in any difficulty, temptation, or danger. I say it again, and it cannot be said too

often. If you have this habit, it will mean that belief and trust in God is a part of your very nature. It will mean that you will never be lonely because you know—not only believe, but *know*—that God is with you, that, when temptation comes, as come it must, and will, to each and all of us, you are not struggling against it alone, but He is with you, fighting it with you, and that the harder you try to overcome it, the more He will help you to do so. It will mean that, when sorrow comes, He will help you to bear it; that when joy comes, and your grateful hearts overflow in thanks to Him who is the source of all happiness, your praise will be pleasant in His sight. And when this knowledge of God is indeed a very part of you, it will be a safeguard to you during your whole life. There will be no possible moment when it will cease to be a protection to you. And you will be surprised how quickly God will come to you, if you make up your minds that you really want Him.

## ABOUT OUR SOULS

“**M**Y God, the soul which thou gavest me is pure.” First of all in our Prayer-book comes the short prayer with which we always begin our service, and then come these words. Clearly they contain a very important thought, for they are put there at the very beginning so that we may notice them at once. Yes, it is a very important thought and I do not think we can do better than consider it and explain it a little. It is rather difficult to understand, but I will try to make it clear.

In the first place I expect some of us do not quite realise what our soul is. We know all about our bodies ; we know that we walk with our legs, see with our eyes, do all kinds of clever things with our hands ; and so on. We also know just a little about those parts of us that are inside our bodies ; we know that we have lungs that enable us to breathe, and all sorts of other organs all wonderfully made, and all with their own work to do, and all working together and all built up together, to make a living person. But this soul—what is it ? where is it ? and of what use is it ? Well, children, it is nowhere. If we were like toys and would all take to pieces, every other part would be there, inside and outside all complete ; but the soul is not a solid thing that can be touched or seen ; it is just a spirit. It is the spirit of God breathed into each one of us. I think, in all reverence, that it is something of God Himself in each one of us, a bit of His perfect

goodness given to each baby that comes into the world, and which one day at the end of life must be given back again. You all—little ones as well as big ones—know what conscience is, that voice within you telling you what is right and what is wrong. Well, that's your soul speaking to you, and the more you listen to it the more you will have the power and the wish to listen, until at last it will hardly need to speak because you will have become so used to doing right. It is very sad to think that some children—none of *you*, I sincerely hope—never listen to conscience at all. Little boys or girls may want to do something wrong, knowing quite well it *is* wrong; and afterwards they feel very uncomfortable, and wish they had listened to that small voice that may well be called the voice of God. And the dreadful part is that the more often they refuse to listen the deafer they get. I don't mean they get deaf in their ears, but the inside part of them that used to hear so plainly when conscience said "Don't do it," gets so deaf that sometimes it never hears at all; and unless they are very careful to stop in time, those poor children will get not to mind if a thing is wrong, and later, perhaps, not even to know that it is wrong at all. That, of course, is such a painful thing that I don't like even to think of it.

Now, this is all quite easy to understand; but there is another point to consider. "My God, the soul which thou gavest me is pure"—that is, spotless and perfect. Well, some day, when each one has lived his life, that is the part of us which will go home to God. We all know that when we die we go to Heaven. Of course, it isn't our bodies that go there, but the soul God gave us when we came into the world, the soul that was once so beautiful. Now, suppose for a moment that this soul of ours really has shape, that it is like a splendid white garment. Every time we do a

wrong thing a stain is made on the garment, and how will it look at the end when it goes back to God ? It would be very lovely to be able to keep it all white and shining, wouldn't it ? There was once a man named Wordsworth, and he wrote a very beautiful poem about children. He said, "Trailing clouds of glory do we come, From God who is our home." That is only another way of saying that the soul that God gave us is pure. Afterwards it just depends on ourselves what we make of ourselves. I think we can't remember too often that when a deed is done—either a good deed or a bad deed—it is done for ever. You can't call back the minute in which you did it, you can't call the deed back. If it's a good deed, you are—you must be—just a little better than you were before ; if it's a bad deed, you are a bit worse, and there is a spot on your white garment which used not to be there. If it's an untruth you have told, you have to fight hard, or it will become easy to become untruthful ; if it's quarrelling, you may grow up a disagreeable person, never agreeing with anybody. We are apt to think that if we do wrong, and say we are sorry, there's an end of it ; but it isn't so. Of course, we must not only say we are sorry, but *be* sorry, and take our punishment ; God will surely understand, and make allowances. But nothing can wipe out the wrong-doing. You know that if you spill some ink on a piece of white paper, the paper is stained, and can't ever look the same ; even if you scratch out the blot with a penknife, there is still a mark. And it's like that with our souls ; a mark has been made on the white garment, on the pure soul God gave us, and not all our tears can quite wash it out.

## ON RULING OURSELVES

**L**AST week we heard something about mottoes, and a very good one was explained to us. Of course you remember what it was, and all of you, I am sure, have been acting up to it all the week. We have thought about it quite a lot in my house. Just to remind you, it ran "I ought, I can, I will." Well, while I was listening, I wondered if you would like to hear about *my* favourite motto, but, before telling you what it is, I had better say that it sounds a bit difficult, but it isn't, really, when you come to think about it. It is out of a poem by Robert Browning, and it is this :

"The common object, yours, mine, every one's,  
Is not to fancy what were fair in life provided it might be,  
But, finding first what *may* be, find how to make it fair  
Up to our means."

Of course, only the big ones understand that just as it is, and I expect they agree with me in loving the grand rolling sound of it. There's a lot to love in words beautifully chosen and put together; but you won't, many of you, understand that until you are older. The little ones, I know, don't find any sense in it, and very likely are thinking it's just the sort of thing a silly grown-up would like. But now listen, and I'll try to explain what the words mean. The common object—the thing for everybody, yours—little children and big—mine—just an ordinary kind of mother—every-one's—that's for parents—for clever people and stupid people, for old people and young people, everybody

—“is not to fancy what were fair in life provided it might be”—not to think “if such, and such, and such a thing could happen, what a good, kind, darling child I’d be.” Two little girls were once talking to each other, and one said: “Oh—

“If one of us could be a queen, and sit on a royal throne,  
With a crown, instead of a hat, on her head, and diamonds all  
her own,  
And wonderful satin shoes to wear upon her dainty feet,  
And a big long feather to wear in fine weather and as much as  
she liked to eat!”

It was something like that. And then they talked of all the things those queens would do. “They would ride abroad in a carriage and pair with a king on their left-hand side.” Well, I don’t remember half, but I daresay you could make up lots yourselves. That was certainly “fancying what were fair in life provided it might be,” but of course it couldn’t; they were just little girls, like any of you. They certainly couldn’t be queens in that sense; but I do hope they remembered afterwards it wasn’t only queens who had the best time. When you come to think of it, no one can be more than happy, and what *does* it matter, if you are happy and jolly the whole day long, whether you are queen of a country or queen of yourself?

*That’s* it. Everybody has somebody to rule, and though it’s only *one* somebody, it’s sometimes very difficult. Do you remember how Alice was once very cross with herself, and scolded herself because herself wasn’t behaving as well as Alice knew she ought, and *knew she could*? “Remember what a great girl you are, remember what a long way you’ve come to-day; remember *anything*, only don’t cry.” Do you ever feel like that? I know you do sometimes, and when you do, when you know that yourself isn’t doing as well as you know quite well it ought, then

remember that you are king or queen of that naughty subject, and can make him or her do what you order. You can make yourselves get up the minute they are told to do so ; you can make them have a cold bath if it's a rule there is to be a cold bath ; you can make them do their lessons and *enjoy* doing them ; you can make them go at once when they are called ; you can make them not be cross when they feel cross ; you can make them do every single thing you know it's right to do ; so am I not right when I say that each of you is a powerful king or queen, even though you have only one subject to rule over ? Nobody's too little to begin to rule himself ; and when he knows how to do it he'll be ready, when he's a grown man, to rule other people, if his work requires him to do so. Think of soldiers. Lots of them start low down. They have to be like schoolboys and do what they are told from the time they get up to the time they go to bed. Well, if they have been lucky enough to learn when they were little boys to be masters of themselves, to be obedient, to be punctual, to be straightforward, to do all they have to do as well as possible, they don't find it at all difficult to learn all their sergeants can teach them ; and when their officers see how well they rule themselves, they think, " That's the sort of man I want to help me to train those others who have got everything to learn." And as for those others—why, you can see, by the way their buttons and boots are all badly polished and smeary, that if they had bicycles when they were boys they never bothered to keep them properly clean. You can see, by the way they come yawning and only half-awake to drill, that they never got up when they were called. You can see by the muddle all their things are in, that they never put their books and toys away in their proper places. You can see—oh, by a hundred little signs—that, when they were little boys, they never learned to rule

themselves. I expect they never tried much to *keep* rules, but thought it was very tiresome to have to do as they were told, were always thinking if *things* were different *they* would be different too.

And now we come to the last words of my motto: "But, finding first what may be, find how to make it fair up to our means." Finding first what may be—which means not longing always for something different, something you think would be nicer and better, but looking about and seeing the nice and good things you have got already. What lucky little girls and boys you really are! What kind parents you have, what a lot of toys and games, and treats and happy times! Well, I don't think, when you have found out what a happy life you lead, you will find it hard to make the best you can of it. And you know that, when your mothers are making rules for you, and seeing that you obey them, when they find they must be rather strict, and even punish you sometimes, when they will not let you play when you should be learning your lessons, they are really doing a very splendid thing for you. They are helping you to govern that one subject of yours—*yourself*; and they look forward all the time to your growing into a person whom all people will look up to and respect. We grown-ups are quite sure that our own boys and girls are going to be some very special kind of human beings. See to it, then, that we are not disappointed.

## SACRIFICE

**D**O you know what the word "sacrifice" means ? It means giving up something you like very much to somebody else, either because you think it will give them pleasure, or because you think it is right to do so. Perhaps the story of Abraham and Isaac is the greatest story of sacrifice—of giving up what is most precious—the world has ever known. But we are not told that Abraham hesitated for a moment. Just as with all of us, everything he had had been given to him by God, and if God, in His great wisdom, decided that the most loved and prized possession must be given back again, he must not question, but prepare to obey. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord," as Job said. I am sure that you don't think, because Abraham did not kill his son and offer him to God, that therefore he did not make the sacrifice. The real sacrifice of himself and his own wishes was when he at once prepared to do as God required and give back what he loved so much. And this is what is meant by sacrifice. It is the spirit that gives to God precious things just because they are precious, not because they are necessary to God (we cannot think that the death of Isaac could have given any pleasure to our all-loving Father), but because they are so dear to ourselves. And it was the same spirit that our ancestors showed when, very many years after this, the Tabernacle, and again, after that, the Temple, were built for God's worship. We read

of all the wonderful things that were brought—gold and silver and precious stones, and fine linen and purple, everything of the greatest value and beauty—to help to make a beautiful house for God. Now we know quite well that a fine house is not a bit necessary for the worship of God. He hears our prayers wherever we say them, if we say them in the right way. And perhaps you will ask why did the Children of Israel bring so many precious things if God would have listened to them just as well if they had had no Temple at all? Well, it was to show, in gratitude to Him who gave them those precious things, that a building dedicated to His service should be as beautiful in its every part as they could possibly make it. They would have been ashamed to live in grand houses themselves while letting the House of God be bare and ugly. I feel sure that the same feeling filled the hearts of those who built our synagogues, where we meet so happily every Sabbath. Each of them is God's House and should be as splendid as possible. So in those other days everyone gave up his most precious possessions and brought them to adorn the Temple; they all gave up something to show their gratitude to God. "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto the Children of Israel that they bring me an offering. Of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering." You see that was what God wanted, something to be given up willingly, with the heart. The rich man was to give up the very best things he had, something he valued very much, something he would miss; and the poor man—what could he do? Well, I think the man who had nothing to give helped with the work, gave the very best work that was in him in order to beautify God's house.

Now, this is not all so entirely a thing of the past, something so entirely over and done with, as you

may think. God is pleased with the same things now as He was then, although the way we must take of pleasing Him has altered with the years that have passed. Offerings have always been made to God. The first ones we hear about are those made by Cain and Abel, who gave of the best of their flocks and fruits because one was a shepherd and the other a husbandman, that is, one who tills the ground. And you remember how when the Israelites went to Egypt they were all shepherds, so that what they gave to God was always sheep or oxen because their wealth was their flocks and herds. But Jews are not shepherds any more—I am sure that few of your fathers have anything to do with cows or lambs—so our offerings must be quite different from those of olden times. So what can we offer to God? For, of course, we must give something. Well, if we do not give the best of our possessions, we can give the best of ourselves in His service. So long as we receive gifts from God, so long must we render something back to Him, or in so far as He forgotten. Think of some of those gifts. Our skill, our strength, our mind, our time, our joys—all come from God, and something of all of them can be given back to Him. And this not because we think that what we give is of use to Him; it is the giving that pleases God. Do you understand? *Do* understand. Every time you give up your own pleasure for the happiness of someone else you are pleasing God. Every time you sacrifice some of your time to worship and thank Him you are pleasing Him; every time you give some of your pennies to help those in need you are pleasing Him; every time you give one of your toys or possessions to one of those others of God's children who have none, you are pleasing Him. There are so many ways in which even the youngest of you may offer sacrifice to God as a way of saying "Thank you" for all He has done for you. And

as you grow older the kind of sacrifice will be different ; perhaps you will be required to give of your skill, of your treasure, of your strength, of your mind, of your time, of your joys, as I said just now ; but the real idea is for ever and eternally the same—whether it is the best of the flocks or the best of ourselves that we offer—it is not the gift that God wants, but the giving.

## ON IDOLS

**W**E have been reading the Commandments to-day, and just a week or so ago we were told that they were the few and simple rules of life that everyone must obey. I am going to take one of them to think out with you to-day, and have chosen "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." It's the second one, and is quite easy and explains itself. You remember it goes on to say, "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image nor the form of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them"—and so on. So if anyone asked you what this Commandment meant, you would explain that, in olden times, people made idols, or images, in stone or wood—carved them or painted them—almost perhaps in the same way as dolls are made nowadays—and then set them up and called them gods, and worshipped them, and sacrificed to them, and prayed to them, and expected that their prayers would be answered, and that these lumps of wood or stone could grant their requests and protect them from evil; although they knew that they were just senseless things, without life, which they had made with their own hands. And perhaps you would recall instances from the Bible in which worship of idols is mentioned. I have read you one such instance to-day in which we are told how our own people forgot for a time the worship of God, and wanted to set up a

golden image, and worship it, as they had seen done in Egypt. And some of you, I expect, know that, in some countries, where the inhabitants are savages and no one has taught them any better, they do the same sort of thing now. But all of *you* do know better; you know quite well that God, to whom we pray, is with us always, and knows everything we do, and is pleased when we do right and grieved when we do wrong. And as for worshipping idols—why, we should laugh at the very idea. And if you have thought about it at all, I daresay you would perhaps think that this Commandment was all very well for our ancestors, the Children of Israel, who sometimes, as we have read this morning, forgot what they had been taught, and made idols like those they had seen in Egypt, but that certainly it is not much use to us nowadays, for we are far too sensible to set up a big doll and pray to it.

But suppose we just think it over for a little. Are we quite sure that there is nothing we set up and worship? Don't you think that sometimes, all of us, young and old, are inclined to make idols *for* ourselves, and *of* ourselves? Don't we sometimes think that this little person called "me" is of more importance, and more to be considered, than people older and wiser—nay, than the commands and wishes of God Himself? "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me"—surely this means that the fear of God and the love of Him should be always with us—always, at all times, deep down in our hearts, and with us in whatever we do. Perhaps you will say, "Of course we can't be remembering all the time." But obeying and pleasing Him *is* remembering, and doing wrong is forgetting, and putting our wishes before His is forgetting—making an idol of ourselves and our own wishes, and doing what pleases this idol instead of what pleases God. Pride, wilfulness, disobedience, unkindness to one another—these are

all idols ; and I expect we all of us have our own special pet one that we put before all the rest, that it would mean a very hard fight to give up. I think our worshipping of idols is even worse than the idolatry, or idol-worshipping, of savages, because we *do* know better, and they don't. Selfishness, for instance—that is a very bad idol ; it is putting ourselves first, before everyone and everything else. Selfishness, or the worship of self—aren't you perfectly shocked to think that when you insist on having just exactly what you want, or doing just exactly what you choose, no matter who goes without or what distress you cause your parents, you are certainly putting love of self before love of God ? But if you think quietly about it you will see that it is so. Now, God is our very loving Father, who delights in the joy of His children, and the one duty we owe to Him, and the one service we can render Him, is to be happy. Is it so very hard to serve such a God—One who has put us in this beautiful world, and just wants us to be happy in it ?

But perhaps you will say—I hope you won't, but we will imagine it for a moment—"I am only happy when I have my own way." But are you really ? Isn't there always an uncomfortable kind of little feeling that almost takes away your pleasure when you are doing something you shouldn't ? Shall I remind you that no one is really nicely, comfortably happy unless he is good ? It's one of the things that are so very true that no one in the wide world can possibly contradict it. So as we see that what God wants is that we should be happy, and as we can't be happy unless we are good , why, let's see if we can't do without those little idols of ours—put away pride, and disobedience, and selfishness, and the rest, and worship God only as He wishes us to do. And let me tell you that if you don't put them right away, and resolve to have no more to do with them, the time

will come when you will find that you can't, that whereas once they were little dwarfs of idols that could quite easily be overthrown, now they have grown into great giants who make us do as they wish, and it will need such a great struggle and effort to conquer them as to be very hard indeed. So we must make up our minds that the Second Commandment is meant for us, who live nowadays, just as much as for our ancestors hundreds of years ago ; that we are just as likely to put other gods before the one true loving God as they were, and that we have a big fight before us, and if we don't take care, and if we don't start *at once*—why, we may get the worst of it.

## “GOD LOOKETH ON THE HEART”

**T**O-DAY we will consider a little verse that we read on most Sabbaths, and that you all know quite well. It is as follows: “The Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” We know that these words were heard by Samuel on that great occasion when he was told by God to choose a king to rule over Israel, in place of Saul, who had proved himself unworthy. And the king was not to come out of some noble family, was not to be a great prince or lord, but was to be chosen from among the sons of a quite ordinary kind of man, named Jesse the Bethlehemite. All his grown-up sons were fine handsome looking men, but you remember that, though Samuel thought that each one must be the right one, still not one of them was. They were all splendid to look at, but God knew they were not good enough to be able to set a right example to other people. And, after all, it was the youngest, who was at the time just a small boy looking after the sheep, who was chosen for the great office. This little boy was to be a king. I wonder how it was that he should have been chosen. Nowadays a boy who was going to be a king when he grew up would have a very special education. Great and wise men would teach him what it was proper for a king to do. He would be carefully taught what were kingly actions, and what were unworthy ones; that he who would have command of others must learn to rule himself; that

faults in him mattered more than in ordinary boys because so many people would know about them, and perhaps imitate them. I think most of the things little David had learned he had taught himself. As soon as he was big enough he had gone out into the fields to mind the sheep. I expect he was generally alone, and used to think a good deal, and no doubt he loved all the wild things, and the flowers and grass and trees. And he learned all he could about them by looking and noticing very carefully, and then, I think, he made music about it all and played it on his harp. The people who study God's beautiful ways by studying His works in the fields and woods, must always be filled with love and reverence for the Creator of all. This was the chief thing that David learned—to love and adore God with all his heart, and to be sure that whatever He did was for the very best. And we know that he learned to be courageous and to want to protect the weak, because afterwards we hear that when a lion and a bear came to devour his poor sheep, he fought with them and slew them both. So I don't think it is any wonder that God reminded Samuel that it was not right to judge by appearances, that although the big brothers were such splendid men, still it was little David who had the makings of a good man, of a kingly man in him.

There are a good many lessons we can learn from all this—aren't there? We may learn first of all that no one, however small, is too young to do God's will. And God's will is also our will, if only we "will" rightly. We all know that the choice rests with each one of us. Although lions and wolves don't swoop down on us, and make us fight for our lives, still dangers do come along. "I won't" comes creeping up, ready to tear our poor little good resolves to bits; and we have to set our teeth hard, and put up "I will" against him. And, after all, it isn't a great fight. "I

won't" is a dreadful coward, and quite ready to run away if only he sees that "I will" is in earnest. God has given us the power to choose and the will to do, and these are great possessions. We can choose the right from the wrong, we can will ourselves to do the right. Don't let us throw these powers away. For if we don't make use of our precious will-power it gets weaker and weaker; and if we do use it, it gets stronger. And we mustn't rely only on ourselves; we must ask God to help us. He wants to do it, and is glad when we ask. "God help me" should be very often on our lips and in our hearts. When we ask our fathers and mothers for anything that they can give us, we all know how delighted they are to make us happy. And doesn't this make us feel that our heavenly Father also is glad when we ask Him to help us? Of course that is if we ask Him with all our hearts; we mustn't pretend. It is dreadful to pray only with our lips while our attention is wandering to something else. This is another time when "I will" should come marching along. "I will think," we ought to resolve, "of what I am saying, and to whom I am saying it." This is when you must remember "The Lord looketh on the heart." At all times when you pray you need loving thoughts of God, grateful thoughts for all His kindness to you, hopes that He will guide you and give you strength to do your duty, and that He will help you to improve day by day, and so enable you to do His will. To make His will our will—what a splendid idea to set in front of us. If we could succeed in doing this, or even succeed in wishing this, we could safely hear the words, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

## CONSCIENCE

**T**HERE are a few words at the commencement of the Morning Service that I would like to speak about to-day. You will find them, if you care to look, in the Prayer-books that your mothers use, and they are as follows: "My God, the soul which Thou hast given me is pure; Thou hast created it, Thou hast formed it, and Thou hast breathed it into me; Thou preservest it within me; and Thou wilt hereafter take it from me and restore it unto me in the world to come."

There are a good many thoughts suggested by these words, but what I specially want to point out are the first ones: "The soul which Thou hast given me is pure." That is to say, we all come into the world perfectly sinless, all the little babies have souls as white as snow. Of course we all know these words are not exactly right; souls are not *things* at all and therefore cannot have colour or shape; but what I want you to realise is that as babies you were all—well, you will understand best if I say, perfectly good. We are all God's children, and He sends His babies into the world as holy and sweet and pure as the angels are. But afterwards when they are old enough to think for themselves—well, it just depends on themselves. You will say, "God is all powerful; why does He not *make* us do the right thing instead of the wrong? He could if He chose." Why, of course He could, but we are sent into the world human beings with power to see the difference between right and wrong,

and free to choose which we will do. I do want you to feel that this is how we grow into men and women. Not *physically* grow, get bigger and stronger and so on—the brute animals do all that; but we grow wiser because we choose to learn instead of being lazy; we grow more reliable, because we see it is a shameful thing not to be able to be trusted as we get older. You see, we choose to make ourselves reliable, we see our fathers are and we mean to be so also. Do try and see what I mean: we are growing, our minds and intelligences are growing, and though we may not at first know it, we are choosing the way we will grow, and that is our very great privilege and what makes us superior to the lower animals. And just as we are to choose to learn, to choose to be trustworthy, so we are to choose to do right. We are to have pure hearts, that is *clean* hearts. If you get your faces dirty you can clean them, though sometimes it takes a lot of scrubbing to do it. When your clothes are dirty you can wash them, and that means soaping and rinsing and wringing and all sorts of things. But it isn't the same thing with hearts; they have got to be dirty or clean and there's an end of it.

Do think about it. None of you do wrong things, really wrong things, I know, but there are lots of little faults that perhaps you think don't much matter. Aren't there little disobediences, little deceits perhaps, little stories? Not that there is such a thing as a little story. If you say something that is not true it's a lie and there's no mincing it. It's an ugly word, isn't it? and nothing to do with any of you, I do hope. And you must not avoid wrong-doing only for the fear of being punished, but because it is wrong. What do you suppose punishment is? The dictionary says it is to cause to pay a penalty. Those are hard words and not just exactly right, I think, either. If that were all it would seem as if, when you had paid the penalty and

taken your punishment, it was all right, and your wrongdoing was quite wiped out. That is to say, supposing you had done something you knew was not right, and your mother had sent you to bed early, or given you extra lessons to learn, well, then you might think that you could do the same thing again and take the same punishment, or you might keep from doing it for fear of the punishment. Now this is a horribly wrong idea. You must be afraid of doing wrong and of that *only*. If you do right only for fear of being punished you have done wrong already. Now isn't that fearfully difficult to understand? But I'm sure, almost, you are all clever enough to understand it. The only thing really to be afraid of is doing wrong. You are not even first to be afraid of displeasing God or your parents. You are to do the right because it is right, and for no other reason whatever. Pleasing God and your parents will follow as a natural consequence. Suppose one of you said to your mother, "I could have told a lie at school to-day and no one would ever have found out, but I didn't because I thought you wouldn't like it." Even the youngest of you must see that's all wrong. Of course that mother would have said: "My dear, even though you had no mother to be pleased or hurt, you must not tell lies." And it's the same with God. Nothing is ever done so as really to please our Great Father unless we would also have done it though we had no Father to please.

And do you know what the real punishment is? The real punishment, the thing that has got to happen, that we can't anyway get out of, is that every time we do a wrong action we are just a tiny bit worse than we were before. Suppose our souls were really white, every bad thing we did would make a little stain that would never come out. You know how it is when you make a blot on a sheet of paper.

Nothing ever makes that piece of paper just like it was before. Oh, I know things can be done with a pen-knife or a piece of ink eraser, but there is always a mark left on the paper, isn't there ? And so when you, of your own free will, make a blot on your own self, that will show for ever too. We can't see it, perhaps, but it is there, and God sees it. Nothing can make you exactly as you were before the wrong thing happened. A thing done is done, whether it's a good thing or a bad thing. Of course when we have done wrong we must repent and be sorry, else the blot will go on getting bigger and bigger. And we must be punished too, but that is to impress on our memories not to do it again. But the thing to remember is that God has given us a white soul, and it is our business to keep it white. I expect we'll lots of us be ashamed when we give our souls back to God when He " hereafter takes them from us " and He sees what a lot of wrong things we have done. Not that I think for a second that you little children have done a lot of wrong things. I'm sure you haven't, and I'm sure you won't ; but I'd like you to think sometimes, when you're feeling a bit serious, what your faults are, what is wrong with you, and, as far as you know any means of mending them, to take those means and have done with it. I don't want you to be sad about it for an instant ; but really it only wants a little effort of will—that *will* that has been granted to us to make us grow, to make us men and women—to choose the right instead of the wrong. And, children, it is fine to have the power to choose.

## SOFT ANSWERS

“**T**HOU shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people.” “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love, but he that harpeth on a matter separateth very friends.” “Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covereth all transgressions.” “A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.” These words are my text. It sounds as though we were going to think about a good deal to-day, but really what I have just read all means the same thing. So we won’t say we are going to think about a good deal, but that we are going to think a good deal about just one thing. I’d like you all to learn these verses by heart, and never forget them. The most beautiful word in our language or in any other is “Peace.” It’s a beautiful word with a beautiful meaning, and there is no happiness, there is no comfort even, without it. And the one place for us all where peace must be, is *home*. Home is the place where everyone, big and little, should live together in love and harmony ; and if they don’t it ceases to be home and is only the house where one happens to live. One gets into the habit of thinking that the person who is responsible for the home is the father who works to support it, and the mother who works to make it comfortable ; and of course they do a great deal towards it. But however hard they work they can’t do it nearly all. Home isn’t just four walls, with fire and food. That’s all part of it, but not what chiefly makes it. We all have to work,

and to work hard without ever stopping, if home is to be a real place of peace for us. Fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, governesses, servants—all have to do their best to make each other happy. That's the whole secret. Not each one striving for himself, but each working for the little community who live together in that particular house. And the children have a big share of the task ; because Father's and Mother's happiness is more bound up in the children than the children's can be in Father's and Mother's.

Well, then, let us think a bit what you can all do. "A soft answer turneth away wrath." That's one thing to consider. Bad tempers there must be sometimes, but they needn't last a moment if everyone else in the nursery will help the poor sick temper to get well. Think of it as a sort of illness, not to be treated by medicines, but to be driven away by soft words and kind looks. You remember when Saul used to get into tempers, and little David came and played sweet music to him ? His was a very bad sort of temper ; kind words were no good for it. But for most of us, little or big, kind words are the best thing possible. For if a boy (or girl) in a temper finds no one is shouting back, or stamping, or raging, it makes him pretty ashamed of himself. There's not the least satisfaction in having a temper to oneself ; so very likely he gets rather sorry, and willing to arrange things comfortably. And as for the rest of you who have succeeded in fighting your own desire to answer back, you have won a victory over yourselves that will make you stronger for ever afterwards. "A soft answer turneth away wrath." Remember the words next time there is trouble among you. "But grievous words stir up anger." That's the other side of the picture. One thing so easily leads to another ; one boy or girl in a temper, all the rest shouting back, saying unkind words

they don't really mean a bit ; tears, scenes, perhaps even blows, until at last Mother comes in and is made miserable by such dreadful quarrelling. And then, as we all know, there has to be punishment, and perhaps there is sulkiness, and it may be days before everything comes quite right again. And during all that time, home isn't home any more, because home must be a place of peace and refuge from strife. So see what you have done. You have not only made yourselves unhappy, but you have destroyed the peace that makes home. "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." No, I don't think there is any doubt at all as to its being good to learn those words by heart.

And then there are the other verses. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people." These words too should be learned in the nursery and not forgotten afterwards. They don't want much explaining, do they ? No one is perfect, and we all sometimes do things we know we shouldn't. But it's not anyone's business to tell tales of the other. Let the one who has done wrong go and own up himself. Let him be brave and admit his fault, and take his punishment. He has done wrong, he has confessed, he is sorry and has borne his punishment ; it is all over. The matter concerns no one else at all. "He that concealeth a transgression seeketh love ; but he that harpeth on a matter separateth very friends." There we have it far better than I could tell you. Someone has done wrong, and the others, instead of telling tales about it, set to work to make everything right again. Boys and girls who act in this way are good chums together ; but the one who tells tales—well, no one likes *him* much. "Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covereth all transgressions." I am quite sure there isn't any hatred, and the love that covereth all transgressions is mothers' and fathers' love, a gift to them from God who is love. I would like to

live in that home I have in my mind's eye, where soft answers turn away wrath, where faults are covered up by loving hands, where the one who has done wrong admits his wrong-doing, where there is no tale-bearing, and where love covers all trangressions.

## “THANKFUL HEARTS”

“**L**ITTLE children, Lord, are we ; childish words our prayers must be ”—this is the beginning of one of our very favourite hymns, called “Thankful Hearts.” I think there are several reasons why it is a favourite with us all. One of them is that the music is very tuneful, and easy to remember ; another is that the words are in nice short lines, and we can learn them easily ; another is that we know it so well, and love it. But now, children, what do the words mean ? Do we, I wonder, think they are just true and right for us, and that if we were clever enough to make up what we should like to say to God, we would give voice to such thoughts as these ? “Childish words our prayers must be.” We can’t think out long sentences, made up of grand words, with lots of syllables in them. Left quite to ourselves, we could only say : “Thank God for all He does for us.” But if we do say this with all our hearts, I feel sure that God accepts the little thought, and loves the little grateful person who is speaking to Him. But in order to feel really grateful, and to want to speak to God, we must love Him. And perhaps this does not seem quite easy to all of us. It is so difficult to love someone we have never seen ; and although we are told very often how much God loves us, *that’s* rather difficult to be quite sure about, too. But suppose Mother had to be away for a very long while, you would know quite well that she was loving you as much as ever she could, wouldn’t you ? Though

she was far away and you never saw her, and she never saw you, you would be quite sure that she *couldn't* forget you, that she would never leave off loving you, and the letters and presents she sent would be a sign that she was always thinking about you. And you wouldn't find it a bit difficult to love her, or to write and thank her for all her tender care. Well, God, too, is always thinking of you; His presents to you are so many that I could hardly begin to tell you of them; and instead of the letters that Mother would write if she were away, there are written all sorts of wonderful messages for you—for all of us—in the Bible; all sorts of loving words which you will read when you are older. When we think of all God does for us, it proves how He loves us, doesn't it? Why, one of the most loving things He does—at least, I think so—is to give the children to mothers and fathers, and to teach mothers and fathers how to cherish and care for their children. That of itself is enough reason for us to love Him, isn't it? And just as all of you are your parents' children, so all the people in the world are God's children; and just as you love to do as your parents wish, so should you all love to do what God wishes. And just as—when you think of it—you want to tell your mothers and fathers how much you love them, and how much you thank them for all they do for you, so should you see to it that sometimes you tell God how much you love Him, and how much you thank Him. I think you have all got this love in your hearts, but you must know that it is only proper that it should sometimes be on your lips too. Just as you feel you must thank your parents for all they do for you, so—and how much more so!—must you thank God.

Childish words your prayers must be—yes, but they will be all the more acceptable in His sight if they are your own little words, and your own

loving thoughts. Don't come here only because you like the service, because you like the hymns and can sing them, but because you like what the hymns and prayers mean, and because you feel it is what you mean, and you like—really like—to tell God what you mean. I don't think there is a word in the whole of our Prayer-book that the youngest of you can't understand. Some of the prayers bless God for His goodness ; some praise Him for His mighty works. Some explain a little how wonderful He is ; some remind us how we must observe His Sabbath ; some ask us to do as He wishes. Some remind us to look back and remember how we have spent the past week ; some beg Him to forgive us if we have done wrong ; some are beautiful words out of the Bible, so simple that anyone can understand them. So don't regard what you hear and read as just strings of words, but listen to them and let the meaning of them sink into your hearts. God is always near to us and will hear all we say to Him. That is a good thought if we are really saying our prayers for Him to hear, saying them with our lips and our hearts too ; but an awful, terrifying thought if what He hears is just words gabbled off without any regard to their meaning, or if He listens and there is no prayer at all. Children, don't let Him listen in vain. He knows just how much each little child can feel and say. However little it is you can give Him, give it with your whole heart. A thankful heart—we all have that, I am sure, and, having it, let us not keep our thanks bottled up within us, but let us tell God, in whatever words we may, how much we love Him, how we will try to do His will, and how we thank Him for all He does for us.

## THIS WONDERFUL WORLD

**M**Y dear children, I hope you paid attention to the beautiful Psalm<sup>1</sup> I have just read to you, as it speaks to us of some of the glories of the world we live in, and that is the subject I wish to speak about to-day. I am sure you will all know the words I have chosen as a text. They are not in the Bible, though the Psalm means just the same thing; they come from a book called "The Child's Garden of Verses," by Robert Louis Stevenson. The words are these, "The world is so full of a number of things, I think we should all be as happy as kings." And the man who wrote them managed to be happy himself, although he had many things to make him miserable. Do you know about him at all? What a wonderfully *understanding* writer he was, and how very fond of boys and girls, and how he loved his native country Scotland, and wished nothing better than to live there always! But he had such bad health that the doctors sent him miles and miles away to an island in the Pacific Ocean, where at last he died before he'd done half the things he wanted to do. Well, one might not perhaps have been so very surprised if he had been wretched and grumbled a lot; but we find him loving all the beauty of the world so much, and being so thankful to God who gave it all, that in spite of his bodily illness—and he was in great pain very, very often—in spite of being away from his friends and the country he loved, and knowing he would never be well

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xix.

enough to go back, in spite of knowing his life could not be long enough for him to finish his work, he was as happy as a king. Not that kings are, as a matter of course, happier than other people, but we fancy they ought to be, and Stevenson thought we should all of us be as happy as—well, say, the good kings in fairy books.

“The world is so full of a number of things”—do you ever think about it at all, or do you take it all for granted? Don’t you ever think it’s very wonderful when you put a seed in the ground and find it grow and grow until it becomes a flower which, when it dies, leaves seeds in its turn to do it all over again? Do you ever look at the trees and think what tiny beginnings they have had? Have you ever taken a blade of grass and thought that, however hard a man tried, he could not make one half as perfect? Have you ever in the country listened to a lark singing high up in the sky and felt as if something were singing in you too, just in sympathy with his gladness? And have you ever watched ants or bees at work and wondered to see how busy and useful they are, and how exactly they know just what they have to do? And at the seaside have you ever found any of those sea-flowers—sea-anemones they are called—which, if you touch them ever so gently, shrink back and close up, but if you leave them alone will presently open out just like a beautiful blossom? Why, I believe there are some people—I do hope not any of you—who let all these things—these miracles—go on under their eyes without taking the slightest notice, or even knowing they are there at all. And there are hundreds and thousands more wonders to explore, more mysteries to study. God is just waiting to tell you all His secrets if you will only ask Him, and want to know. For I need not remind you that we owe all the beauty, all the wonder of this marvellous world, to God. I don’t think

we remember it often enough, or we should open our hearts to Him more often than we do. Why, if your father brings you home a new toy, you don't just take it as a matter of course, and carry it away without a word, do you? Naturally you thank him for it, and think how kind it is of him to remember you in the midst of his busy day. But, children, do we, any of us, thank our Heavenly Father often enough, who remembers us all the time, and who, every day—every minute of every day—sends us the marvels of His creation to fill us with delight?

'O God, Thy mercies are new every morning. Not a day passes without leaving us some token of Thy love, for Thou dost grant us more blessings than we can count. Thou hast placed us in a beautiful world. We thank Thee for the joys and pleasures which Thou hast given us. Blessed is He who spake and the world was, who formest light and createst darkness, who renewest day by day the works of the creation. The breath of every living creature shall bless Thy name, O Lord, and the spirits of all flesh shall glorify Thee." These words are all taken, here and there, from your Prayer-books, so they must be quite familiar to you all; but I wonder how many of you have thought of them much—thought what they mean. "Thy mercies are new every morning"—well, isn't it true? We wake every morning, and all around us, in every direction, are God's wonders and mercies for us all to see and rejoice at, and be thankful for. Look around you, children, look at the world you live in. Don't think that, because things happen every day, they are commonplace and uninteresting. "The world is so full of a number of things." Why, there isn't time to see even a quarter of those within our reach. I don't mean just stupidly looking at them, but looking at them with wondering interest, with a desire and a determination to under-

stand, and with a mind and eye that sees all the beauty. Never think that it's a grey, ugly world ; God's beauty is everywhere if we only know where and how to look for it. There's the sky now, a picture ready waiting for you whenever you like to look. How many of you really ever do look at it ?

Just think for a moment of a sunset. You have, all of you, I expect, been to a pantomime and seen the transformation scene. Well, could you dream of comparing the two ? Think of how at first there is the fiery sun that you can't look at without blinking ; and the colour that starts being rather dull, and gradually gets like a sea of gold, which then changes into the most glorious red, and orange, and purple ; and these burn and glow for a good time, and then gradually sink into palest greens, and blues, and faintest pinks, and then, after a bit, it is all dark, dark blue, and the moon comes up with her silvery light, and the stars shine through. Well, is there anything in the world as lovely ? (And, as for fairies, they may be there, too, for anything we know.) And the day-time sky is just as good to look at. Think what it is like sometimes on a hot summer day, all dark blue, with dear little flecky white clouds floating about. And there's the sky which the fisher-people call a "mackerel" sky—shoals of baby clouds that are driven before the wind ; and there's the sky with grand sweeping billows of clouds—big things like mountains. Oh, wasn't David right when he said : "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth the work of His hands" ? All this is there for you to look at. "The world is so full of a number of things." Oh, do look at them, and know them, and enjoy them. When you go away for your holidays—some of you to the sea, some to the country—will you all try to see with eyes that *do* see, and hearts that wonder, and minds that intend to understand, some of

the marvels of hedgerow and pond, of sea and shore, of sky and mountain, everything that comes your way? And will you sometimes think to whom we owe all these wonders? And will you sometimes give thanks to Him? "The world is so full of a number of things." I believe God is more pleased with the wonder and rapture that fills our hearts as we learn to know and love His works than by all the set prayers in the prayer-books. For when we feel so full of happiness that we must needs sing for joy as the birds do, why, I think that's the best thanks of all.

THE END





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